

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

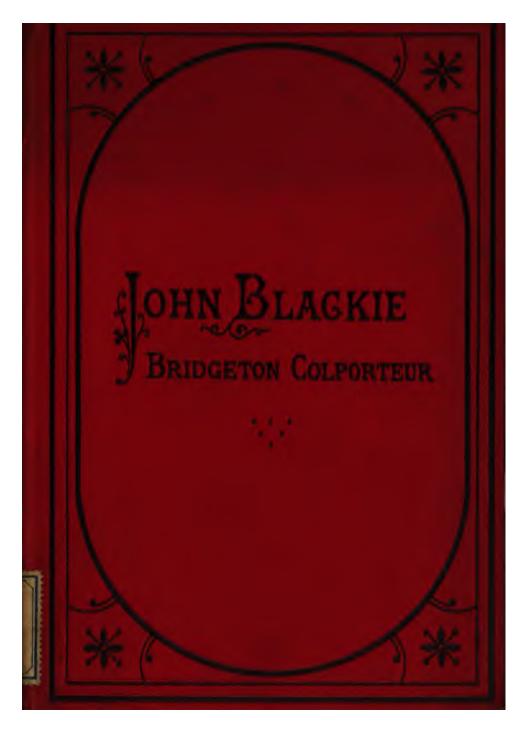
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + Refrain from automated querying Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/







•



SOULE IEM



JOHN BLACKIE,
The Bridgeton Colporteur

JOHN BLACKIE

THE BRIDGETON COLPORTEUR

A Memoir

BY HIS SON, THE REV. JOHN BLACKIE

EDITED BY THE

REV. WILLIAM GILLIES

GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE RELIGIOUS TRACT AND BOOK SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND



Edinburgh

RELIGIOUS TRACT AND BOOK SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND

1881

210. p. 3

| | | | 1 |
|---|---|--|---|
| | | | |
| , | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | , | | |
| · | | | • |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

WHEN Mr Blackie, "the Bridgeton Colporteur," died, a desire was in many quarters expressed that some record of his useful life should be prepared as an encouragement and an incentive to other Christian workers, more especially Sabbath-School Teachers, City Missionaries, Evangelists, Colporteurs, and others, with whom he most associated. No one who knew Mr Blackie could be surprised at this. He had become very widely known, he was greatly beloved, and his labours had made a deep impression on all with whom he came into contact. The reader will find ample evidence of this in the following memoir, and he will learn how much may be done by a genuine, loving, Christian man of the old-fashioned, God-fearing type, who abounded in prayer, put his hand willingly to any Christian work to which he seemed to be called, and toiled with unaffected simplicity and unflagging zeal in the Master's service from day to day, or rather night and day. With the gravest concern for souls, his was the true, the bright-faced piety, which, as Cowper tells us, is "cheerful as the day," which weeps, it may be, and "heaves a pitying groan for others' woes, but smiles upon her own." And hence much of his power.

The writer of the memoir speaks fittingly for himself in this sketch of his father's life. Four years ago his health gave way, when he had the near prospect of a settlement as a minister of the Free Church. This illness terminated fatally, when the first sheets of the volume were passing through the press; and considering the circumstances in which he prepared it, we are rather surprised than otherwise that its defects should be so few. We trust that it will answer the purpose for which many have desired to have it.

WILLIAM GILLIES.

March 1881.

NOTE BY DR SOMERVILLE.

I HAVE been requested to write a prefatory note to the memoir of the late Mr John Blackie, prepared by his son, the Rev. John Blackie, who, with a hand trembling under serious indisposition, has lovingly traced these reminiscences of a revered father. Blackie was possessed of valuable qualities. telligently evangelical in his views, he maintained a consistent and guileless walk for a long succession of He yielded a bright example to his own family. As an office-bearer he proved the watchful friend of those under his care, and as a well known resident in a populous locality he exercised a beneficial influence, alike by the genuineness of his religious character and his occupation as Colporteur of Christian publications. He had a vigorous understanding, and was distinguished for a freshness and quaintness of utterance which imparted interest to what he said, while the steadiness of his affection and his transparent sincerity endeared him to many.

Such a man's life, useful during its continuance, may now in this brief record of it, prove of service to his brother Colporteurs, as well as to those classes of society among whom he was accustomed to move.

I entertained for Mr Blackie, during an extended acquaintanceship, an unaltering esteem.

A. N. SOMERVILLE, D.D.

GLASGOW.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.—BIRTH AND EARLIER YEARS.

THE royal preacher declares that of making books there is no end. Every man may be said to write his own life, although his autobiography is not printed, put into circulation, or read by others. Some of the best of lives, like beautiful flowers, bloom, cast forth their sweetest odours, and pass away unobserved. Who would not like to have heard more about the poor, wise man that, by his wisdom, delivered the city which was besieged by the great king? Yet no one remembered that same poor man (Ecclesiastes ix. 13-17). Very likely that poor, wise man, having done all this, thought he had done no more than it was his duty to do, and was ready to exclaim, "unprofitable servant!" Had the subject of the following memoir ever been told that some of the things he had said and done should be collected and printed in a book, he would have vehemently protested against such an idea. From a deep-seated sense of his own unworthiness, he ever chose the lowest seat, and when it was said to him, "Friend, go up higher," he always spoke and acted as still the occupant of the lowest. It was only, therefore, at the earnest desire of some of his oldest and best friends, who had been long associated with him in the Lord's work, and in obedience

to the unanimous wish of the Glasgow colporteurs. that some memorials should be printed and put into circulation of one so dearly beloved and so greatly esteemed as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, that this task-or rather labour of love-has been undertaken. From the many tributes to his memory which have been received, some of which will be found in their places throughout the succeeding pages, it will be seen that other and abler hands might have been found both ready and willing to engage in such a work. the subject of this memoir had few letters or papers that would have helped towards the end in view, the task naturally fell to the present writer. He has to request the reader kindly to bear in mind that the book has been written during a time of much bodily weakness, and that it is the work of a devoted son. in affectionate remembrance of one of the best of fathers. He, therefore, asks that the silken mantle of charity be cast over all its defects. Of this, however, the reader can rest assured, that what he reads is a narrative of facts. The book has been written with the aim of forming something in the way of a handbook, that may encourage and stimulate the lay missionary. the colporteur, the Sabbath-school teacher, and the Christian worker, however humble or obscure their spheres of labour may be, by showing "that those who sow in tears will reap in joy," and that "he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

John Blackie was born on the 19th November 1810, at Maryhill, a village near Glasgow. His father,

Robert Blackie, was a papermaker at the Dalsholm paper works; his mother's name was Euphemia M'Callum. They had a family of seven children, of whom John was the eldest. They were both pious, and sought to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," while they were spared to them. At that time, and for some time afterwards. there was no church at Maryhill, but now it can count two Free churches, one Established, and one United Presbyterian. Robert Blackie and his wife belonged to the Secession Church, and were members of the Rev. Mr Kidston's congregation, East Campbell Street, Glasgow. Many, in the east end of Maryhill, could tell the time of day on the sabbath morning as they saw Robert Blackie passing on to church; so regularly did he attend his place of worship. He died when John was about eight years of age, leaving his widow with the cares of the household, which consisted of five young children. Often did John Blackie tell the members of his own family, and not unfrequently with tears in his eyes, of the struggle that his mother had, to make both ends meet; of her toiling late and early, even passing many a sleepless night in mending and making for her children.

Like most boys, John was fond of amusements and out-door sports, and had a great love for pet animals. He was a good swimmer, and the Kelvin, or the Canal, afforded him frequent opportunities for the display of his skill in this favourite art. It was on the banks of the Kelvin, in company with some companions, who were jumping over a sheet of water, that he met with an accident, the effects

4 John Blackie, the Bridgeton Colporteur.

of which remained with him through life. ing to excel other boys who jumped into the water, he, out of bravado, would jump over it a second Unfortunately, however, for him, on one of these occasions, he sprained his left ankle, a mishap which resulted in the stiffening of the knee joint, and gave him the gait that, ever afterwards, marked him out readily wherever he went. Well does the writer remember, when a little child, of his telling stories about his favourite dog, that bore the ferocious name of Tiger. He was tiger only in name and appearance, however, for master Tiger was the favourite of the whole neighbourhood. He was a capital watch, and did yeoman service during the time of the resurrectionists or body-snatchers, when nearly every graveyard had to be watched or guarded to prevent men of the Burke and Hare type from doing their nefarious work. Tiger was almost every night in the graveyard, where he did duty as a first-rate scare, and on more than one occasion did he hold fast a culprit with merciless grip. Tiger was also a good convoy, for in those days policemen were few and far between. He would conduct his charge safely to his destination at the very moderate price of a slice of bread, which he must obtain before he made the return journey home.

In consequence of his father's death, John's school days were very few; and, unfortunately, Scotland was not yet blessed with an Education Act. He had to go to work at a tender age. He served his apprenticeship as a calico-printer in the old print works at Maryhill, and after seven years became journeyman. Just before he had finished his apprenticeship

his mother died, leaving him with the responsibility of the house, and in charge of two brothers and a sister; and nobly did he carry out his mother's dying charge, until they were all able to do for themselves.

Though of a sociable and generous nature, and therefore prone to seek the society of his fellows, his conscientiousness and sense of moral obligation preserved him from much evil, and prevented him from falling into some of the more pronounced ways of sinners, or giving heed to the counsel of the ungodly. During the earlier years of his life he was often the subject of deep conviction of sin, which kept his conscience tender. But it was not till after his marriage that he was savingly brought to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

He married, in 1833, Jane Henderson. Her father, Alexander Henderson, was a lineal descendant of the famous Alexander Henderson, one of Scotland's Commissioners to the Assembly of Divines which met at Westminster and framed the Confession of Faith, and who was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland held at Glasgow in 1638, the Assembly by whose acts the Prelatic form of church government was overthrown, and Presbytery again restored in Scotland. He, himself, also possessed somewhat of the spirit of his great ancestor. belonged to the Cameronians, better known as the Reformed Presbyterians, who are now merged in the Free Church of Scotland. He was valiant for the truth, and often met in discussion the advocates of Unitarianism, and wrote a pamphlet during the conflict, wherein he exposes that error.

6 John Blackie, the Bridgeton Colporteur.

John Blackie's marriage proved to him a great blessing, for he became associated with one who was piously and well brought up, and who proved a true help-meet for him throughout his whole after life, sharing his joys and sorrows. Though now left behind to mourn his loss, her sorrow is not that of those who have no hope.

Shortly after their marriage, on account of what was known as the "great strike" among the calico printers, he left Maryhill for Crofthead, in the parish of Neilston. Here he remained for a few years. During his residence at Neilston he attended the ministry of the late Dr Fleming, a man of considerable ability but a "moderate" in his religious views; as Mr Blackie used to say, not an uncommon thing in many parishes in Scotland at that day—a form of godliness (and even little of that in not a few places) without the power. After a short stay at Paisley he removed to Finnieston, Glasgow, where his real spiritual life began, as will be seen from the following chapter.

CHAPTER II.

CONVERSION AND FIRST EFFORTS.

THE tide of evangelical life was steadily rising in many parts of Scotland. Revivals and times of refreshing were marking this period. The news of the great religious awakening at Kilsyth produced a deep impression throughout the country; and not a few were saying, "Oh, who will show us any good?" The Lord was raising up a band of faithful servants, men who were not ashamed to declare the whole counsel of God, and who preached the gospel in all its simplicity and power, and with saving results.

It was at Paisley, and just before his removal to Glasgow, that John Blackie heard the late Robert M. M'Cheyne preaching with his characteristic earnestness his famous sermon on "The Great White Throne." The saintly appearance and solemn message of this servant of Christ made a great impression on his heart and conscience, and produced in him great contrition of soul. The former strivings of the Spirit were now revived, and earnestly did he put the question. "What must I do to be saved?"

It was while under these gracious dealings of the Spirit of God, that he heard the Rev. A. N. (now Dr) Somerville preach a most impressive discourse from Lamentations i. 12, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that

pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." This sermon greatly strengthened and deepened former convictions. At this time he removed to Finnieston, Glasgow, and his state of mind naturally led him to choose as his minister Mr Somerville, who was then in the vigour of his youth and making full proof of his ministry.

From the day of his marriage he had conducted family worship every evening, but at best it was looked upon as simply a duty. And previous to his awakening, indeed, his readings of the Bible may be well described in the following lines:—

"I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage, Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page; But e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree, Jehovah Tsidkenu seem'd nothing to me."

Now, like Bunyan's pilgrim, as he read the book, he wept. Worship was henceforward conducted morning as well as evening. Eagerly were the holy Scriptures searched that he might find rest unto his soul. There he saw sin to be exceedingly sinful, and that his sin, in particular, merited the just condemnation of God. He felt he had now to do with the holy Lord God, and that the Lord would be just in sending him to hell in punishment of his sin. Whatever others might think of everlasting punishment, he had no difficulty in the matter, and often did he say in after years, "Only let a sinner be once awakened to a true sense of his sin, then would the Holy Ghost show him that hell was a terrible reality." Months of great

distress and bitterness of soul were passed by him. and often out of the anguish of his soul did he cry, "O that I knew where I might find him!" length one Sabbath morning, waiting, as usual, upon the word, Mr Somerville gave out for his text Ephesians 2nd chapter 1st and 2nd verses. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: wherein in time past ve walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." During the delivery of the sermon light and peace were brought to his soul. and he was enabled by faith to rest on the Lord Iesus Christ as his Saviour. His joy was unbounded. Nature appeared to him in a different aspect, and the trees of the field seemed to clap their hands. The Sabbath now, to him, was a day of the greatest delight, the mingling of his voice with the voices of God's people in the worship of His Sanctuary, combined with the faithful preaching of the word, were sources of great joy and rejoicing to his heart.

The Bible became to him the man of his counsel, and his prayer was, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I will observe it with my whole heart." "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight."

The fellowship prayer meetings, and the worship in his own home, all became to him wells of water and springs in the desert. His soul had escaped, as a bird from the hand of the fowler, and his tongue sang

10 John Blackie, the Bridgeton Colporteur.

aloud the praises of the Lord. He found expression for his feelings and experience in the following words:—

"And from above the Lord sent down,
And took me from below;
From many waters He me drew,
Which would me overflow.
He to a place where liberty
And room was hath me brought;
Because he took delight in me,
He my deliv'rance wrought."

PSALM xviii. 16, 19.

Or in these words:-

"He took me from a fearful pit,
And from the miry clay,
And on a rock he set my feet,
Establishing my way.
He put a new song in my mouth,
Our God to magnify:
Many shall see it, and shall fear,
And on the Lord rely."

PSALM xl. 2, 3.

Or again :---

"O thou my soul, bless God the Lord;
And all that in me is
Be stirred up his holy name
To magnify and bless.
Bless, O my soul, the Lord thy God,
And not forgetful be
Of all his gracious benefits
He hath bestow'd on thee."

PSALM ciii. 1, 2.

Mr Somerville's ministry was greatly and continuously blessed to him, and he soon began to

grow in grace and make progress in the divine life, as was seen in his exercises at devotional meetings. He now began to wonder, as all genuine converts do, what he could do to make known the name of Jesus; for gratitude ever welled up in his heart for his great deliverance from a guilty and miserable state.

This gave him a compassion for the souls of others. Love to Iesus was henceforth the ruling principle of his life, and often would he exclaim, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." He was therefore not contented with simply saying, "All that fear God, come, hear, I will tell what He did for my soul." But he sought to be ready at all times, to commend the gospel to them that were without, and to be able to give "a reason for the hope that was in him, with meekness and fear." He endeavoured to keep a watch upon his words and walk lest at any time the adversary should blaspheme. He sought to keep alive a consciousness of his own weakness and nothingness, always choosing the lowliest place, and esteeming others better than His aim was to live Christ, and he ever himself. sought to have a single eye to His glory.

A district was allotted him, in a low-lying and somewhat rough locality, which he visited regularly with tracts. His simple, frank, and winsome manner, which no one could find fault with, ever made him a favourite with the people. In this district there were a number of Roman Catholic houses to which he had access; and it is gratifying to note that he succeeded, where others had failed, in speaking of Christ as the only Saviour of poor sinners. In fact he retained his influence with Roman Catholics throughout life. His

method was not so much to decry their errors as to preach the truth, which, with other commendable qualities, won for him among them the epithet of "The Decent Protestant."

As one of many incidents it may be mentioned that, only a short time before he died, and while delivering tracts on the street, a Roman Catholic priest, who was passing, stopped and looked on; the colporteur handed him a tract, and said:—"You see, sir, I'm giving away the leaves of the kingdom." Many a Roman Catholic sent for him in a time of sickness, and on a death-bed. One old Highland Catholic, in particular, with whom he had many a conversation as to Jesus being the *only* Saviour, sent for him when dying, and requested that he would read and pray with him. This man, before he died, gave good evidence of having passed from death unto life.

After two years' stay at Finnieston, another unfortunate strike at Clydebank print-works, caused his removal to Bridgeton, a circumstance which he regretted much at the time, as all his associations were bound up with the Anderston Congregation. His own impression was that he would not be long in Bridgeton, but God had determined otherwise, for, "the Lord had need of him" there.

Bridgeton, in the purpose of God, was to become the scene of his devoted labours for forty years. Being young and strong, the distance between Bridgeton and Anderston soon seemed nothing to him, so he continued under the ministry of Mr Somerville at Anderston church. He regularly attended the Sabbath services and the weekly prayer meeting; and other meetings, as his time, family arrangements, and other circumstances, would permit. Bridgeton was not then the populous and important East-End district that we find it to be to-day. Many of the present streets were unknown, and the sites which five of the churches now occupy were at that time fields of waving corn. The small one or two storied houses, covered with thatch or red tiling, of which most of the buildings then consisted, have now given place to large and lofty tenements. Instead of the modern gas-lamps of the street, that almost turn night into day, there were dim flickering lights, maintained from small oil vessels, and these were only here and there. Policemen were unknown, and were happily not so much needed as now.

Being thus settled in Bridgeton, its claims began to weigh upon Mr Blackie's spirit. He opened a kitchen prayer-meeting. He also became the promoter of the first ragged Sabbath school in the district, where he diligently taught; and, having secured the assistance of a few teachers, the homes of the children were regularly visited. Very soon he found all his spare time fully occupied, and he became well known in the district. where his services were most ungrudgingly given to all who might require them. At any hour of the night he would rise to read and pray with the distressed or the dving. Never, during the whole period of his life. did he postpone compliance with any such request. No one was ever turned away from his door with a disappointed look, nor was any heart made heavy by his refusing its call. Many a home misses him to-day.

54 John Blackie, the Bridgeton Colporteur.

for it cannot now be said, as it was said times without number, "send for John Blackie."

He was a lover of all good men, and willingly did he co-operate with them in any good work. Yet he held his own principles, as to church government, intelligently and firmly.

The Ten Years' Conflict was, shortly after he came to Bridgeton, drawing to a close. At last came the day of the Disruption; and when the news reached him that four hundred and fifty ministers had given up their all for Christ's sake, he wept and gave God thanks, that so many of His servants were enabled to be faithful to Zion's King. And, along with Mr Somerville, his office-bearers, and people, he cast in his lot with the Free protesting Church of Scotland.

At this time he was ordained deacon, and had a district assigned him from Jamaica Street eastwards; and every Saturday he gave up work for a considerable time for the purpose of collecting the weekly offerings of the people to the Sustentation Fund.

The Temperance movement, which was making considerable progress at this time, received his warmest sympathy and hearty support; and along with a few others, he held a meeting to promote this cause in the district. He also became a director of the "Bridgeton Association for Religious and Intellectual Improvement," an association which accomplished much good in the east end of Glasgow. By Sabbath and weekday schools for the young, and by sermons and lectures, it aimed at the religious, moral, social, and intellectual improvement of the people; and it maintained

a male and a female teacher, with assistants, up till the time of the passing of the present Education Act. He also rendered valuable assistance to the missionaries of the district, often taking entire charge of the meetings of such of them as were students of divinity during their sessions at the Hall.

The following from the Rev. Alexander Wilson, the worthy minister of Bridgeton Free Church, may not inappropriately be inserted here:—

"I am glad of an opportunity of saying, in common with the community of Bridgeton, how highly I esteemed your father, the late John Blackie. Long before he became a colporteur, I knew him as one greatly interested in the moral and spiritual welfare of all around him. He took great interest in the young people, and by his long and unwearied labours was the means of doing them great good. Among his fellow workers and those with whom he became acquainted, he sought every opportunity of making religious impressions upon their minds, and in a kind and simple way leading them to the Saviour. walk and conversation were eminently becoming the gospel of Jesus Christ, and, like the great Master Himself, it may be said of him, he went about doing good. The whole community held him in the highest respect, and in his humble sphere he was the means of accomplishing a large amount of good in this populous neighbourhood."

Everything which had for its object the glory of God and the good of men found in John Blackie an earnest advocate. In going and coming from church he had to pass through the Glasgow Green, and often was his soul vexed to see so many seeking their own pleasure on the Lord's holy day. At that time open-air meetings were principally confined to the Methodist brethren, and were not so much had recourse to as they are in these days. Speaking of the matter with his minister, the latter readily agreed to come out and preach to the multitudes, of many of whom it might be said "no man careth for their soul."

The venerable Dr Somerville's locks were then black and bushy. Well does the writer remember. when a very little boy, on some of these occasions, in company with his father, meeting the minister at the entrance to the Green, at which place he generally put on his bands, and then walking with him as far as the site of the present gymnasium, where the religious service was usually held. On the day previous notices would be posted up on conspicuous trees and elsewhere, and great crowds generally gathered to listen to the evangelist, as in glowing terms he proclaimed his loving message. A chair had to do duty for a pulpit or rostrum; the writer's elder brother acted as beadle, his duty being to carry down the chair to the place of meeting. For many a day this article of furniture was known in the house as "Mr Somerville's chair." and certainly he left his "mark upon it," as the seat was all pitted over with the impressions produced by his shoes.

Many a time did some of the juvenile members of the family, before some of their companions, when they had the house to themselves, act Mr Somerville from this "pulpit," and when the poor chair was no longer fit for active service, a part of it, bearing the pitted impressions, was retained for many a day as a kind of memento of the minister's visits to Glasgow Green. Many who heard the preacher have long since rendered their account. But the great day only can declare the good that he accomplished by these efforts.

Not a few still cherish happy recollections of the sermons delivered on these occasions, and more especially of the texts: and none who heard him could doubt the fervour, eloquence, and power of this man of God. What a useful and brilliant life his has been! His message is still the same old gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, while his ardour and eloquence seem undiminished. In India, America, Australasia, and now in our great Continental cities, he is raising the old cry in the ears of countless multitudes; of high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned—the old cry, which thirty-five years ago he raised on Glasgow Green, and which for forty-five years he has continued with unfaltering voice to utter in this city—that cry, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ve to the waters. and he that hath no money, come ye, yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price;" "And the spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Or that other cry of the heavenly merchantman, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed;" "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my

voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me."

God grant that His servant may still be enabled to go on, "in the strength of the Lord God," making mention of His righteousness, until an abundant entrance be administered to him in the heavenly kingdom.

CHAPTER III.

HOME AND FAMILY CIRCLE.

To command his household aright was the earnest desire and fervent prayer of Mr Blackie. In this he found a willing helper in his dear wife. By their marriage they had eight children, and no parents ever prayed more devoutly that God would fulfil that promise to them: "All thy children shall be taught of God, and great shall be the peace of thy children." Earnestly did they pray for and with their family, teaching them to pray, instilling into their minds the doctrines of God's holy Word, setting before them a godly example, and striving to give them an education as their means and circumstances permitted.

Mr Blackie was a devoted and dutiful husband, and a loving and affectionate father: he lived in the bosom of his family, and to him there was no place like home. His happy and cheerful manner, with his holy walk and conversation, had a marked effect upon the conduct of the children. Well does the writer of this narrative remember, when he had been wayward or disobedient, how painful were his own feelings, as he observed the grieved look his father had whenever he found those dear to him doing that which was wrong. Often in such circumstances did he take his children aside, and, after telling them of the sinfulness of their conduct, and reminding them that God's eye was upon them, pray with them that they might be forgiven. This was more his method than bringing down the rod of correction.

He seldom went from home at a holiday time without some, if not all, the members of his family being with him.

His spirit was young to the last. He had a fund of anecdote, and many an hour was spent in hearing a good story, or listening to an account of some of the exploits of his boyish days.

Being such a father, it was not to be wondered at that his children should be very fond of him. He took great interest in their temporal welfare, but his chief desire was, that Christ should be formed in them, the hope of glory; and in his daily intercourse with them this great end was never lost sight of; the conversation being generally led to turn upon some religious topic, which could not fail to produce deep impressions on their youthful minds.

He had a great love for the sanctification of the Sabbath day, and care was taken that arrangements should be made for as many as possible, if not all, of the members of the family statedly and regularly attending the house of God. He was grieved at seeing so many shops open on the Lord's day, and

would often look out a suitable tract, hand it to the offending shopkeeper, and, in a kindly way, warn him of the sinfulness of the course he was following. Frequently at evangelistic meetings, and in the Sabbath school, did he quote the sentences of the late Dr John Love, "Cursed be the health, wealth, or pleasure sought on the Sabbath day."

His home was not without its disappointments, trials, afflictions, and deaths. Isabel, his first-born, died at the early age of seven years and three months; Euphemia, his second daughter, at the age of seven years and six months: both, even at so tender an age, giving evidence of going to be with Iesus, which is far better. Robert, his first son and second child, died when eleven years of age. He was, indeed, a remarkable boy. His illness being somewhat lingering, his parents had many opportunities of reading, speaking, and praying with him. It can truly be said of him, as was said of young Timothy, "that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures." During the time of his illness his father never went out of the house without leaving him some text of Scripture to meditate upon. One day, when in a perplexed and anxious state of mind, he left him the text. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29); from which he derived great comfort and peace of mind. day a friend called and said to him, "Robert, all good children, you know, go to Heaven when they die," telling him of a little boy who died that was good, and said his prayers night and morning. After she left, Robert said to his mother, "O mother, a'

widna like ta gang ta heaven jist because a' said ma' prayers." The following is part of a conversation which took place during a visit of the Rev. Dr Somerville:—

The Minister—"Well, Robert, as I was coming along I saw a number of boys very happy at their play; would you not like to be out amongst them?"

Robert—"No; I've no wish now, for I can lie here and think and pray to Jesus."

Minister—"And do you think that Jesus hears a little boy like you?"

Robert-"Yes."

Minister—"Where do you find out that, Robert?" Robert—"In the Bible."

Minister—"What does Jesus say in the Bible?"

Robert—"He says, 'I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.'"

Minister—"Ah yes, Robert, and that other sweet text, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.' Do you think you will go to heaven because you pray to Jesus?"

Robert-- "Ah, no."

Minister—"What will take you to heaven, Robert?" Robert—"Only the righteousness of another."

The minister, after speaking about that righteousness, and commending him in prayer to the Lord Jesus, bade him "good bye," and before another visit, Robert was before the throne. Before he died he had a great concern for a younger brother. His mother, observing him weeping one day, and asking why he wept, he told her that it was his concern about Sandy.

His mother, trying to soothe him by saving, "O, Robert, you see, Sandy is very young yet, and may be, by-and-bye, he will love Jesus also;" Robert answered, "Ah, mother, he is not too young to die." On a scrap of paper, which was found after his death, were written the following lines, addressed to this brother.—"Seek the Lord while in health, for" (the remaining part of the sentence was unfinished, his weakness being so very great). The doctor called just before he died, and Robert seeing his mother weeping after he had left, said to her, "O, mother, don't weep for me, I'm not afraid to die. Mother. on the morning of the resurrection, the people of God will just be as if they had wakened out of a long sleep." Nineteen months after the death of Robert, lames, a fine boy of two years, was also taken away from the evil to come.

Keenly did John Blackie feel the loss of his dear children, and mourn for them with a heavy and sorrowful heart: but he gave God thanks that none of them was taken away from him in his unconverted state or before he was able to pray for and with his children. He found comfort in these words. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." And from the heart could he say, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

On the 25th day of December 1863 death again visited his dwelling, and removed from the family circle Alexander Henderson, his second son and third child. Three years previous to his death, Alexander. much to the delight of his parents, became the subject of a work of divine grace. Carefully and well brought up at home, and for three years in the Bible-class of Dr Somerville without being absent a single night, there was laid a good foundation of Bible knowledge, which became exceedingly useful to him after his conversion and during his last illness.

From his earliest years he possessed a tender conscience, and throughout his youth it often became troubled, especially during family worship, and under the ministry of the word. Being open, frank, and somewhat humorous in his nature, having a good voice, and being fond of society, his company was much sought after by youths of a like spirit. But while in the pursuit of pleasure, the Holy Ghost laid an arrest upon him, awakening him to a true sense of his guilty and sinful condition, and bringing him, after months of distress and anxiety, to peace in believing. His previous training now became of the greatest service to him. Before, he knew well the letter of God's word, but now the Holy Ghost filled it for him with life and power. His first care was to win over his companions to Christ. Possessed of a good memory, and having a ready utterance, many opportunities were afforded him, during the next three years, of telling what the Lord had done for his soul. and making known the name of Jesus. In addressing evangelistic meetings, the topics of his address chiefly turned on man's inability—God's sovereignty —the work of the Holy Spirit—saving faith—the perseverance of the saints—the love of Christ in undertaking the salvation of sinners—the glory of His person, and the greatness of His work. Many were

greatly edified by his earnest, pointed, and scriptural remarks; and not a few, savingly converted unto God. In dealing with individuals, while loving and affectionate, he was remarkably faithful; the remembrance of which, after his death, in more than one case, resulted in true conversion. His was a short life, but a very spiritual and happy one.

Going out too soon after recovering from rheumatic fever, he caught a severe cold, which laid him down again, and ended in his death. Many visited him during his illness. Up till the day he died, his mind was calm and unclouded. Strong in faith and in the Holy Ghost, full of love to his Saviour for what he had done for his soul, no one ever left his room without receiving some sweet or suitable word. His soul was ever filled with gratitude at the goodness of God. One day his father and mother held sweet converse with him about Christ and the things of the kingdom. His father had to leave him for some time, and as he was going out at the door, he turned and said, "Sandy, I'm sorry to leave you." "O father, don't be sorry for me," was his reply, "for I am a King's son." He exhibited wonderful patience during the time of his trouble, and much tenderness to his parents for all their care and attention towards him. On the morning of his death, and while drawing near his last moment, in the presence of his father, mother, and the writer of this narrative, he exclaimed: "See how the Lord is blessing me!" His last words were: "Glory, glory, Lord, come, come." Anticipating the separation by death, he used to say to his parents and the other members of the family:

"It's only a little while." That little while has passed at length, and father and son are now walking the streets of the New Jerusalem, where His servants serve Him; there they see His face, and His name is upon their foreheads. In the loss of Alexander, who had reached the goodly age of twenty-five years, his parents received a sore stroke, which was borne with Christian fortitude.

Mr Blackie had also to mourn the loss of four little grandchildren. A dear little boy of six years of age, bearing his own name, died two years ago. Not being very strong, he was much in the society of his grandfather, who never wearied in showing him pictures, telling him the bible stories of Joseph, Moses, Samuel, and David; of Jesus, His birth, life, death, and resurrection; until the little fellow's questions, answers, and other sayings, became remarkable for a child of such an age. Little Johnnie was a great favourite with all who knew him: he had a sweet, pleasant, and thoughtful expression, and often did his merry laugh bring joy to the home. Having undergone a medical operation, which proved unsuccessful in removing his trouble, he lingered a few months, and then his little life ebbed away. Never a day passed during these months without his grandfather seeing him, and never a night without his praying by his bedside. With bright eyes would he earnestly look into the face of his grandfather, and listen to the old, old story of Jesus and His love. His aunt, of whom he was exceedingly fond, taught him some psalms and hymns, his favourite psalm being the twenty-third, "The Lord's my Shepherd," and his three favourite hymns, "O, how I love Jesus,"

"The sweet by and bye," and "The home over there." These he would sing with great delight, as his strength would allow, and when not able to sing himself, they had to be sung to him. Hearing of a person who had died suddenly in the same building, he said that they should have sent for his grandpa, and he would have prayed to Jesus for her, and she might have got better. On another occasion he said: "I have three doctors; Dr P., Dr M., and grandpa." One day he said to his grandfather: "There will be three Johns in heaven; grandpa Iohn. Uncle Iohn, and wee Iohn." His many sayings, too numerous to mention here, and his trustful little spirit, often reminded one of that incident in the ministry of our Lord, when He took a little child and set him in the midst of His disciples, and said: "Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

In all these sore dispensations John Blackie's prayer ever was that he and his family might receive their sanctifying results. He sought diligently and prayerfully to know God's purpose in them, so far as that could be known here, by prayer and meditation on the Word. One great result was that he was enabled to keep a loose hold of the world, to set his affections on things above, to redeem the time, and to watch and pray, seeking to be ready when his Lord should call. Often did he quote that saying of Samuel Rutherford's: "Build your nest on no tree here, for God has sold the forest to death."

Another great result doubtless was that it enabled him to comfort others, with the comfort that he himself had been comforted with, and in giving him large heartedness and thorough sympathy with the distressed, sorrowful, bereaved, and dying, as will be seen in a future chapter of this narrative.

CHAPTER IV.

DAYS OF REVIVAL AND TIMES OF BLESSING.

DURING the year 1858 tidings of the American revival were being received in this country. Soon the wave of blessing reached Ireland, and the intelligence of a wonderful work of grace induced many ministers and Christians interested in the Lord's cause, to go over and see with their own eyes this work of God. Many while there would exclaim, as they left the meeting held in barn, school-house, church, or green field: "We have seen strange things to-day."

Newspapers and religious periodicals gave thrilling accounts of this movement. A longing desire was felt in many parts of Scotland to share in the blessing; and in Glasgow, as elsewhere, prayer meetings were held for the purpose of entreating the Lord to visit this land, which had often been blessed with "times of refreshing" in former days. The Wynd Church of Glasgow soon became the scene of the like gracious things as had been witnessed in Ireland. Its doors

had to be open every night in the week. Soon the work spread to all parts of the city. Daily prayer-meetings were established, and God was entreated that the droppings might result in showers of blessing. At the very first Mr Blackie, along with a few other believers, opened a meeting in Bridgeton to pray for the blessing, which soon came in rich abundance. His kitchen-meetings had to be adjourned to school-rooms, and these again soon became too strait for the numbers who came, either through curiosity, or saying, "What must I do to be saved?" Larger places were secured, where meetings were held on Sabbath and every evening during the week.

Soon open-air meetings became a necessity, and every available help was secured in addressing the gatherings of the people. Ministers, missionaries, students, converted soldiers, sailors, and other laymen were among those who gave intelligence of God's work in other parts, related their own conversion, or spoke in all the warmth of their first love, urging sinners to seek the Lord while He was to be found, and pointing the anxious to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

There were two meetings to which Mr Blackie devoted, at this time, the best of his energies. Both of these were held in Bridgeton Public Hall—one on Sabbath forenoon for people in their working clothes, the other on Wednesday evening, more of a general character. Both meetings were remarkably well attended, and became means of great blessing in the neighbourhood.

In carrying on these services he was much assisted

by earnest and devoted labourers. Especially must the name be mentioned of the late Thomas M'Auley, Esq. of Shawfield, a man of rare parts, and thoroughly consecrated to his Master's service. His clear, intelligent address, with his solemn appeals to the heart and conscience of the sinner, his tenderness in dealing with souls under concern, combined with his remarkable experience of the Christian life, were calculated to be eminently helpful on such occasions. He is still remembered with loving regard by many who heard him at these meetings. One also recalls the late Rev. Thomas Toye, Great George Street Presbyterian Church, Belfast, who repeatedly addressed both His eccentricity of manner, peculiarity of style, thorough acquaintance with the Word of God and his fervent appeals in urging sinners to close with the overtures of mercy will never be forgotten by some in the district. Many professed, during Mr Toye's visits, to have received Christ: and well does the writer of this remember, when any one said that he had found peace, the old man getting up upon a seat and asking the meeting to give thanks to God by singing the first four lines of the 103rd psalm.

These meetings Mr Blackie was enabled to carry on for about three years, when he gave up his ordinary calling, to devote his whole time to mission work at Rutherglen.

Hundreds professed faith in Christ during these years: some, like the subject of this memoir, have entered into rest; others are alive to-day, giving full proof of the reality of their faith; and others walk no more with Jesus, indicating that in their case it was

only a movement of the feelings, their goodness being as the morning cloud and the early dew.

But it was not at meetings alone, or indeed chiefly, that John Blackie sought to win souls. In his movements day by day among his fellow-men, whenever an opportunity offered, he was ready to speak a word for his Master, and to arouse the careless, direct the anxious, and minister comfort to those in distress. The following is one of many cases that might be adduced as illustrating alike his zeal for souls and his patient continuance in well-doing.

Mr Peter Gardiner, now superintendent of one of the largest Sabbath-schools in Bridgeton, sends the following:-

"For more than thirty years I have had the privilege of being acquainted with the late John Blackie. When about eleven years of age I was for sometime a scholar in Main Street Sabbath-school, of which he was the superintendent, and ever since I have retained the pleasant recollection of seeing his smiling face, the exhibition of his earnest manner, and hearing the kind entreaties of his loving soul as he pressed us in sympathetic tenderness to give our hearts to Jesus.

"In September 1858 I became, by God's grace, anxiously concerned about the salvation of my soul. At that time I was slow to reveal my miserable state to any, but in the kind permission of God I found a few Christian friends, whose warmth of love and kindness of sympathy towards me helped me to unfold my mind to them.

"Among them was Mr Blackie, who having learned that I was groping my way in the darkness, nobly came to my rescue; and well do I remember how glad he was, not only to speak to me and pray with me himself, but also to bring me to other experienced Christians, with the view that I might, by God's blessing, be so led as to have the possession of eternal life by simple trust in Jesus Christ. And although I went on fearing and doubting till September 1861, Mr Blackie did not, like some other good men, get tired of me, and leave me to the cruel mercies of my stubborn will and hard heart, but, in his homely way, dealt with me in the kindness of his fatherly soul. At last the light of an assured confidence began to dawn on my long benighted soul, and no one was more joyful than Mr Blackie to see my darkness chased away before the rising Sun of Righteousness."

Among other meetings with which he was more or less identified was a prayer meeting of soldiers, held once a week for some time in the barracks, and in which he felt a deep interest; and a meeting held in the Magdalene Institution, in the city, on the Sabbath evenings, which he often addressed, and not without some good results among a class very difficult to reach.

The following note is from another convert, A. R., who was present at one of these latter meetings:—"I accompanied Mr Blackie one Sabbath evening to the Magdalene Institution in Parliamentary Road, where he addressed, in the hall of that Institution, a large number of fallen women. He chose as the subject of his address Malachi iii. 3, "And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." His address was most interesting, speaking in a loving and gentle manner of

the great refiner and purifier in a way that showed his great experience in dealing with cases of conscience. His touching references to mother and home, the great love of Christ in seeking out and saving the lost. His loving forbearance with the erring and wayward, all proceeding from a heart burning with love and devotion to his Saviour, were such that numbers of the poor women wept during the whole time he was speaking, and not a few were completely broken down.

"At the close of the meeting he shook each by the hand, asking them to come to Jesus just as they were. A number of them could not leave the place, which literally became quite a Bochim, and, after further conversation with them on the willingness of Christ to receive them, it was with some difficulty that he could get away."

The above account gives a fair description of what happened under his earnest addresses during the many times he visited that institution.

Towards the close of 1863 Mr Blackie was appointed missionary at Rutherglen, in connection with the Free West Congregation—the Rev. James Munro's. This led him to give up his secular calling, and to devote his whole time to the Lord's work.

He entered upon his new sphere with much heart. and earnestly did he labour in that populous burgh in seeking the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men. But the great day only can declare the good he was permitted to accomplish.

Every Sabbath forenoon and evening he held services in the new Town Hall, which were largely attended. He regularly and systematically went from door to door among the non-church-going part of the population, and by his earnest, loving, gentle manner, soon found his way, not only to the homes but to the hearts of the people.

During the week evenings he held a number of kitchen meetings, and many were induced to attend these, as well as the Sabbath services, who seldomin many cases not for a very long period—had seen the inside of a church, or mingled their voices in songs of praise. Multitudes, however, remained careless and indifferent to the things that concerned their peace, and would turn away from the gentle invitation of the warning voice, saying practically in their hearts, "Who is the Lord that we should obey Him?" Their stolid indifference and apathy lay heavy on the missionary's heart, and often did he, in concert with Mr Munro, the godly minister, consult as to what means could be adopted to reach this class. After prayerful consideration it was proposed to hold a series of open-air meetings, so that if the people could not be induced to come and hear the word indoors, the word, by the blessing of God, might, by this means, find its way not only to the ear but also to the heart and conscience.

In these services he secured the valuable aid of Robert Cunningham, better known as the "Briggate flesher"—a remarkable trophy of divine and sovereign grace, one of the first-fruits of the awakening in the Wynd church of Glasgow, and a man much used by the Spirit of God in reaching the lower classes.

The first meeting was held on the Sabbath evening

in the principal street in the town, and near the usual place of meeting. After the singing of a psalm, the reading of the Scripture and a short prayer, Robert stood forth and addressed the people. To those who have not seen Robert Cunningham, the following description of the scene may not be without interest. He was a man of about average height, of strong bodily frame, with hair cut short, blind of an eye, dressed in a blue jacket and vest, a cravat of a blue ground with white spots about his neck, and possessed of a stentorian voice which was heard at a considerable distance off; such was his appearance that night as he stood forth telling what the Lord had done for his soul. Soon he had quite a sea of faces before him, numbering some of the worst characters in the place. In deep earnestness did he beseech men to come to Christ, crying out in melting tones, "O sinner, look at me, look at me; and if you look at me you'll never despair but what God will receive you graciously and love you freely. O sinner, look at me, I was fortyseven years before I saw the Lord's Supper served; look at me. I was trained in this toun o' Ruglen for a prize fighter. Many a battle in a twenty-four roped ring have I fought, for which I have often been laid up in prison, and my poor mither often comin' and handin' me a clean shirt through the iron gratin'." Then he would relate how the Lord met him, made him cry for mercy, and led him to Christ, calling at the top of his voice, "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost;" or, "He made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;" or his favourite text, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Then plaintively would he cry, in the language of Donald Cargill, "O what ails ye at Christ, what ails ye at Him? O sinner, eternity, eternity, where will you spend eternity?"

There is reason to believe that great good was accomplished by this series of open-air meetings, which lasted for a week. At the close of the meeting outside many were induced to enter the hall to be spoken with about their state. Not a few professed to have come to true peace in believing; and many at the present day speak of those meetings with the greatest interest.

His work in Rutherglen gave the highest satisfaction to the worthy minister and session of Free West Church. But, on account of the somewhat critical state of the minister's health, it was thought advisable to employ a probationer who could take the pulpit duties. An effort was made to retain the missionary's services in connection with all the congregations of that town, but, owing to some sectarian feeling, this was abandoned, much to the sorrow of many interested in the Lord's cause, but of none more than the poor people who had heard the gospel gladly at the mouth of the missionary.

The Rev. James Munro, the venerable minister (Emeritus) of Free West Church, Rutherglen, writes regarding his work at Rutherglen in the following terms:—

"My knowledge of the late Mr John Blackie, colporteur of Bridgeton, goes back over a long stretch of years, and just in proportion as our acquaintance became more intimate, he rose in my humble estimation and regard.

"Mr Blackie was employed for a time as missionary at Rutherglen, and performed the congenial duties of the office with untiring industry and ardent devotion. finding favour with all classes, while specially winning his way to the hearts of the poor and the sorrowful. Many, little used to tender, considerate dealing, learned in him to confess the influence of genuine Christian kindness."

Never having used notes of any of his addresses, it is a matter of regret that none of these can be given in his own language and style. His religious addresses were intelligent, scriptural, and warm. Speaking with great facility his mother-tongue, his style was natural—always simple, but never silly. He affected nothing. His remarks were principally the expression of his own experience of the word of God, and God's dealings with his own children. He had his favourite portions of the word which he loved to read. meditate on, and expound. He knew scripture in its doctrinal relations, which gave soundness and consistency to his remarks.

His experience in dealing with the anxious being large, he was very useful in helping the soul to get rid of its refuges, pointing it to Jesus as the sacrifice and offering for sin, accepted by divine justice, and opening up the way to peace of heart, peace of conscience. peace with God, and eternal life and blessedness.

It was not in Rutherglen, however, but in Bridgeton, which had been so long the scene of his selfdenying labours, that he was to spend the remaining years of his life; and it may here be stated, that from 1859 till 1865 were years of great happiness to his own soul. He never was happier than when speaking of, or commending the Lord Jesus. He carried constantly with him a copy of the holy scriptures, and also a number of well-selected tracts. By the road. the river, and the rail, he was instant in season and out of season. He lacked no opportunity of conversing with his fellow passengers, and very soon would the conversation turn on the subject that lay nearest his heart. In this matter his conduct was discreet and prudent; he forced himself on no one, but sought to win all by love. Even when laid aside for a brief period from active labour, and unable to leave the house, he has been known to put tracts over the window, following each with a short prayer that the Lord would make it a blessing.

No one believed more in the power and efficacy of prayer than he did; he felt like Luther and many eminent saints, that, the more he had to do, the greater the need to pray that it might be accomplished, and that whatever was well prayed about was well studied. He was never taken aback when asked to engage in this exercise, for prayer had become a habit of his mind. Ever reverent, but always in childlike simplicity did he approach the Almighty, feeling that God was in no way removed to such a distance that he could not be sought unto and entreated—that he was a God not afar off, but nigh at hand; and his uniform experience was, "It is a good thing for me to draw near to God." It was a subject of frequent

remark the power he had in pleading the Lord's own promises to help and to bless, and the great liberty he enjoyed in prayer. He felt that the great God who counts the numbers of the stars is the same Lord God that "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Often during the night, and when sound asleep, has he sat up in bed, and gone through his devotions as if he had been perfectly awake, and when questioned next morning, he had no remembrance of the circumstance: while, during the day, he would habitually, in moments of leisure, read a few verses and engage in prayer. In fact, he strictly obeyed the Apostle's injunction. "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God;" and, in his sweet experience, he found that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, kept his heart and mind through Christ Jesus. To-day, in the family circle, his familiar voice and earnest entreaty that God would bless and protect each member apart are sadly missed. But what is others' loss is his gain; he has gone where prayer gives place to praise, gone to join the hundred forty and four thousand, having their Father's name written in their foreheads, where they sing a new song before the throne, a song that no man could learn but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth.

CHAPTER V.

COLPORTAGE—A NEW NAME FOR OLD WORK.

THE Glasgow Committee for Colportage, in connection with the Religious Tract and Book Society of Scotland, was formed about the year 1865. committee consists of some of our leading citizensgentlemen who are well known for the interest they have taken in the moral and spiritual welfare of the people-such as Mr Martin, Auchendennan, Mr White of Overtoun, Dr J. A. Campbell, Mr Alexander Allan, Mr J. R. Miller, Mr A. A. Ferguson, Mr J. Campbell White, etc. The object of the Committee was to extend the usefulness of the Society by the employment of a number of agents in different parts of the city, who should devote their time to selling the religious literature published by the Society, or, in the words of Mr Martin, "placing the bible and other wholesome literature into the hands of the people, and counteracting the pernicious influence of the obnoxious literature that now forced its way into society." It was on the recommendation of Mr J. R. Miller, long his beloved and highly valued friend, that Mr Blackie was chosen for the Bridgeton district by the Board of Directors at Edinburgh. He entered upon his office in the summer of 1866, and continued to discharge its duties with great zeal and assiduity until five days before his Lord said, "Come up higher."

He was not long engaged in his new occupation

ere he found it most congenial, and it soon became evident that he was specially adapted for this kind of Christian work.

The Directors of the Society found in him a faithful servant, while he found in his work much pleasure and rare opportunities for doing good. His experience in public works, and his frequent contact with young people in connection with his Sabbath-school, gave him occasion to deplore the quantity of light and frivolous literature that was disseminated in the district; so he set out, from the very first, with an earnest endeavour to try and supplant this evil by circulating the healthful periodicals and magazines of the Society.

He agreed with the good John Newton, that if tares and wheat must grow together, he would fill his bushel as full of wheat as possible, so that there might be less room for the tares. He was able to do good service in this direction during the fifteen years that he was the Society's colporteur. Turning to the Society's report for the year 1879, approved of and adopted at the annual meeting of the Glasgow Committee, 29th March 1880, his sales of bibles, books. and magazines for the year are stated to amount to £136, 9s. 4d.; periodicals circulated, 19,154, and tracts distributed gratuitously, 7000; notwithstanding that 1879 was a year of great depression in trade and scarcity of work within his district. He endeavoured as far as possible to acquire a thorough knowledge of the magazines and books kept by the Society. From his rare love for the holy Scriptures, it was his earnest endeavour to dispose of as many bibles and testaments as possible, knowing well that it is the law of the Lord that converts the soul that lies in sin.

While he knew that all the books of the Society were of a healthful character, he was persuaded that there were some more likely to accomplish a greater amount of good than others. These it gave him a pleasure to recommend, while he willingly showed all that was in his box. When asked for a suitable book for the young, he would put into their hands such books as "Pike's Early Piety," "Todd's Lectures to Children," "Fox's Book of Martyrs," "Short Lives of the Covenanters," "Bright Examples," or such histories of the Bible as are contained in that admirable little book called the "Book of Books." being asked to recommend a book for a young man or a young woman, he would suggest "James's Young Man from Home," "The Dairyman's Daughter." "Spenser's Pastor's Sketches," "The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation," or a good memoir, such as "Adelaide Newton," "M'Cheyne," "Duncan Mathieson," and many biographical sketches of the lives of the good and the great, of which there is an abundance belonging to the Society. As to his books for the anxious and distressed, these among others had always their place.—"God's Way of Peace." "Iames's Anxious Enquirer," "Baxter's Call to the Unconverted," "Doddridge's Rise and Progress," or "Alleine's Alarm." And often would he recommend to young mothers who were beginning the cares of life, such lives as "Mrs Rodgers," and "Mrs Winslow," or "Bogatsky's Golden Treasury," and many of the Society's periodicals, such as "The British Workwoman." "The

42 John Blackie, the Bridgeton Colporteur.

Mother's Treasury," "The Mother's Friend," "The British Messenger," or "Spurgeon's Sermons." Books of a general character he took an interest in disposing of, were such as the works of M'Cheyne, Bunyan, Baxter, Spurgeon, the Bonars, Hodge's "Way of Life," "Moody's Addresses," and the writings of other evangelical divines of a past and a present generation. Thus, with well selected pack, would he day by day go his rounds from door to door. He was a well-known figure in the streets, as, with bag suspended from an oaken stick over his shoulder, he was to be seen going to and fro. All knew John Blackie, the colporteur. Groups of children would press round him at many a street corner, seeking for a tract to take home, or a little book for themselves. Strangers would often look upon the scene in wonder or in admiration; but the children's importunity, or at times their want of manners, brought no word of rebuke from his lips. The worst word that ever any child received was "Come back again to-morrow." Never did he leave his home a single day in prosecution of his calling without asking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in going from door to door, seeking a blessing on the bibles and testaments he might sell, or on other books in accordance with God's holy Word, as well as a blessing on those who might be induced to purchase these. Thus did he carry sunshine to many a home, as hundreds can testify, and eternity will reveal.

Being so well known in the district, he had no difficulty in obtaining admission when he presented himself at the houses of the people, unless, perhaps, in the case of those who had recently come to Bridgeton.

In hundreds of homes he was a welcome visitor. Alas! the inmates miss him to-day; no cheery smile, no kindly enquiry, no suitable word or earnest prayer of his will be again welcomed within their dwellings, but he being dead yet speaketh. Let the remembrance of his visits provoke them to follow him in so far as he followed the Lord Jesus.

In going from house to house he required much wisdom, prudence, and tact, as he came in contact with all classes and kinds of persons. His visits generally were short, and he always tried to adapt himself to the circumstances of those he called upon. Possessed of a good share of the philosophy of common sense, he knew by experience that a consciousness of want created desire. Blessed with an excellent memory, he could both retain and reproduce what he heard or read, a faculty which did him good service in connection with former visits and conversations. This gave an additional interest to his visits, and helped him much in making friendly enquiries regarding different members of a family. He would proceed as soon as possible to the true object of his call, generally by handing a tract, or by repeating some favourite text of Scripture. Entering a house one day, and proceeding in this way, he was told that the inmates did not belong to his persuasion. Asking to what persuasion then they did belong, and being informed that they were Roman Catholic, "O," said the colporteur, "but I sell your Bible," and taking out a copy of the New Testament, translated from the Latin Vulgate,

44 John Blackie, the Bridgeton Colporteur.

he began to read some well-known verses. Well did he know that they seldom had the Scriptures in their hand, or if permission was given to read such by the priest, it was a copy with notes and comments approved by the Church. This happened not unfrequently in the course of his rounds. He was glad to have such opportunities, as his belief was, that if the members of the Church of Rome only had the free and untrammelled use of the holy Scriptures, their superstition and darkness would be dispelled by the light of life, and the whole fabric be speedily brought to an end.

In houses where he was better known religious subjects would be freely talked of. His various books. periodicals, or magazines, on these occasions would be discussed and recommended, and not unfrequently would he hold a short meeting of neighbours when this was found practicable. His visits in the homes of the godly were much appreciated and longed for. His rare spiritual experience, narrated in his own quaint and familiar style, would often brighten many a half-hour. The greatness, goodness, mercy, peace, and love of God he never wearied in extolling. The grace, beauty, and matchless perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ were to him themes of endless delight. while the Holy Spirit's work, in the awakening, regenerating, and sanctifying of the soul, always received its due place in his religious conversations.

With a keen eye did he watch for souls. Often did he draw a bow at a venture with the best of results, and many a home was made happy by his being made the means of bringing into it the water of life. It will always be a matter of regret to the writer of this narrative that he did not take notes of a few of the many instances of real and permanent good which resulted from these labours, some of which were told within his own home, as they would have served a useful purpose had they been inserted here. The colporteur himself was chary of giving results, and when he had occasion to refer to these spoke with great caution.

In the published Report of the Glasgow Colportage Committee for the year 1878, there is inserted among the reports by the colporteurs one from Mr Blackie, which will give an idea, in his own words, of the value that he set upon the society's work, and contains an account of two cases, which may be considered representative of what occurred times without number during his fifteen years' service. These are as follows:

"While it is the great object of our work to put into the hands of the people healthful reading, yet there are many opportunities ever occurring where we can be very useful in speaking a word in the name of the Lord Jesus; opportunities of directing the young, of dropping a word in the ear of the careless, and of speaking a cheering word of comfort to the sick and distressed both in body and mind.

"On calling at a house in my district with their magazines, I found the mother of the family much taken up with the 'cares of this life.' From time to time I endeavoured always to make the conversation turn on the value of the soul. Now she is in a very anxious state of mind. Last month she said to me, with tears in her eyes: 'I would give the whole world

if I could say, "My beloved is mine, and I am His." I look upon this case as a most hopeful one. The influence of the mother is beginning to affect the other members of the family.

"Entering another house in the district, I found two men in a very interesting state of mind. had been anxious about their souls for some time back, but had not yet come to 'peace in believing.' I turned my visit into a little prayer meeting, and endeavoured, out of the Scriptures, to show the ability and willingness of Jesus to save. On leaving, both expressed how happy they had felt during our conversation: one remarking that, not long ago, 'such a conversation would have been anything but a pleasure to him.'

Such cases show how usefully a life may be spent in this work, and with two hundred agents scattered over the country, what good may the Society not accomplish? Often did Mr Blackie magnify his office, and thank God and take courage, for all the way by which the Lord had led him. He was duly impressed with the importance of the work of the society. if grace were given to go about it in the true spirit of Christ; while, on the other hand, he was conscious of the tendency, when that spirit was lacking, to let the work degenerate into the routine of mere book hawking.

His humble endeavour was to serve God in the gospel of His Son, and to be faithful to God by being faithful in every duty. His desire was to be a winner of souls, and because his work afforded him the very best opportunities for trying to accomplish this object. that work became every day more and more his delight.

He avoided controversy when making his rounds, not because he had no fixed opinions on certain lines of doctrinal truth—on the contrary, his religious principles were based upon what he believed to be the truth of God, and had not always been adopted without much thought and anxiety—but because he loved peace, and because he knew that controversy, instead of opening the mind to the truth, has generally the opposite effect. He set the highest value on a thorough knowledge of the word of God, which reveals the worth and importance of the soul, and the nature, desert, and punishment of sin, and unfolds the great salvation, which brings life, peace, and everlasting blessedness to those who were in possession of it. learned in the school of Christ, and to those who said, "are there few that be saved?" he gave Christ's answer: "Strive ye to enter in at the strait gate."

In the midst of his many and varied opportunities of usefulness, however, he learned to appreciate the force of the apostolic injunction: "Pray without ceasing." To discharge his duties aright, he felt he needed to lean hard on the strength of another, even upon Him who said: "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." He was not only a faithful servant, but a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Often did he try to steal a march upon the enemy, and when occasion required, he was not slow to show front. But his rebukes were "with all long-suffering and doctrine." He knew that it was "given him on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe upon His name, but also to suffer for His sake," and that he must "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." He

remembered the words of the Lord Jesus; "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." This gave serenity to his whole bearing, and upheld him in spirit when landily strength failed. Yet no man, perhaps, while faithfully discharging his duty to God, had fewer enemies than he had. Even young men, bent on pleasure and folly, were influenced by his presence and speech. One day, coming along, he met three young men, such as now described, at the corner of a street. On seeing the colporteur, one of them exclaimed to his companions: "Here comes old John. trying to chase the devil out of Bridgeton." Disregarding this remark, in his own loving way, he handed each of them a tract, spoke a word, and passed on. ()ne of the young men laughed, folded the tract, and seemed to think no more about it; but, in the case of one at least of the other two, that word was a nail fastened in a sure place. Next morning, while in the projecution of his ordinary calling, the one who made the icering remark fell from the roof of a house, and was taken up dead. On the two that were left this event produced a great impression. The scene of the incident of the previous day was revisited by the colporteur, the tracts given away by him were read, recourse was had to the long-neglected bible, and the young man who had been troubled by the colporteur's words the night before was led, in due time, to peace in believing, and is to-day following on to know the Lord.

A feature of colportage, worthy of being mentioned, in the "book-stands," which are set up in conspicuous

parts of the city during the Glasgow Fair holidays, which occur in July. Of late years Mr Blackie took his stand at Bridgeton Cross, which formed the entrance to his district. Previous, however, to the removal of the "Shows" from Jail Square, at the head of Glasgow Green, he, in company with a brother colporteur, took his stand at that "Vanity Fair," which lasted about two weeks. It was a strange sight for the frequenters of penny theatres, circuses, menageries, wax-works, Waterloo-flies, and hobby-horses, to see alongside of venders of ginger-beer, lemonade, ice-cream, rows of nut-barrows, stands of balls and candies, cheap-Johns. &c., &c., and amid the constant noise of drums. trumpets, gongs, fiddles, bag-pipes, and the crying. howling, and laughter of painted-faced show-men. and general hubbub, the modern Christian and Faithful standing forth, selling their commodities, consisting of Bibles. Testaments, and sound and wholesome religious literature. There might be seen groups of bewildered-looking men and women, young men and maidens, boys and girls, gazing at the strange stand, with texts of Scripture hung up, painted in large type, such as: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life:" "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." You might see some give a wild stare as the old man read from a large Testament certain portions of Holy Scripture; as for example: "On that day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come

to Me and drink;" Or, "Jesus said unto her, whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life:" while others would listen with eagerness, as in his own quaint graphic style, he would contrast the peace which the Spirit bringspeace of heart, peace of conscience—the peace that the world cannot give or take away—with the gawky gilded toys of earth, which cannot give lasting joy, and the "fool's laughter, which is like the crackling of thorns under a pot." Thousands of tracts were distributed at these stands, and many a time has the colporteur been heard to say that he was sure real and permanent good was done in this way. He held many short conversations with persons purchasing books about the concerns of the soul, and opportunities were afforded him of letting fall some word, in season, in the hearing of persons who would look on, and pass by. In this form of witnessing for Jesus, the colporteurs were often much encouraged by words of good cheer from Mr Martin and others of the directors and friends of the enterprise, who always paid an annual visit.

When Mr Blackie began the work of colportage in Bridgeton he also resumed Sabbath-school work, and established a district prayer-meeting, which had been previously given up on account of his work at Rutherglen. He also placed his services, most ungrudgingly, at the disposal of others engaged in Christian work in the district. His district prayer-meeting was truly a green spot in the desert. Many

felt it to be a sweet hour of prayer. Experienced believers and aged persons found it to be a real means of grace. He endeavoured to secure the services of many of the Lord's true servants to For many can testify this help in this work. day that, for himself he would choose the lowest seat, putting others always to the front. It was the good of souls that he longed for, and not the forthputting of his own particular sentiments. The people longed for the return of Monday night, for bands were loosed, the bowed down raised up, the disconsolate comforted, and all helped better to discharge the duties of this overtaxing life. The word of God, read and expounded, the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs that were sung, the near approach that one felt to God in the prayers offered up, made one forget one's sorrow and long for the day when there will be no breaking up of the congregation of saints. Many felt it to be an earnest of that which is to come, and not a few of those who were most regular in their attendance have now joined the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. At the close of each meeting, and before the company dispersed, Mr Blackie generally gave out the following hymn:-

> "I'm a pilgrim and a stranger, Rough and stormy is the road, Often in the midst of danger, But it leads to God.

"Clouds and darkness oft distress me; Great and many are my foes; Anxious cares and thoughts perplex me, But my Father knows.

52 John Blackie, the Bridgeton Colporteur.

- "Oh, how sweet is this assurance,
 'Midst the conflict and the strife;
 Although sorrows, past endurance,
 Follow me through life,
- "Home in prospect still can cheer me; Yes, and give me sweet repose, While I feel His presence near me, For my Father knows.
- "Yes, he sees and knows me daily;
 Watches over me in love;
 Sends me help when foes assail me,
 Bids me look above.
- "Soon my journey will be ended, Life is drawing to a close; I shall then be well attended, This my Father knows.
- "I shall then with joy behold Him, Face to face my Father see; Fall with rapture and adore Him, For His love to me.
- "Nothing more shall then distress me In that land of sweet repose; Jesus stands engaged to bless me, This my Father knows."

Alas! the leader, too, has got to the end of the journey. Now is he well attended at His right hand, where there is pleasure for evermore. He has entered that land of sweet repose, where the inhabitant nomore says, "I am sick."

In passing through the streets of his district, he had always a smile, or friendly nod, to the passer-by, or a word of good cheer to the many who would stop and speak with him. Shortly before he died, meeting one

who has long been engaged in Christian work, and who had felt the severity of the winter, he expressed sympathy with him on account of the state of his health, took him by the hand, and, just after saying "good-bye," gently added, "Well, George, five minutes of heaven will make up for all our troubles down here." Many an encouraging word of this kind did he give to Christian workers.

He was not long a colporteur until he suggested to his brethren the propriety of meeting regularly to entreat the Lord's blessing on their labours. This gave rise to the colporteurs' monthly prayer meeting, of which the Rev. William Gillies, of the "Religious Tract and Book Society," is president. Seldom does Mr Gillies miss a meeting, and he always gives important information bearing on the good work of colportage, and a word of encouragement to the workers. Generally one or two ministers of the city are also present at these meetings, and not unfrequently some of the directors of the Glasgow branch of the society.

It has been said that Mr Blackie was never absent from one of these meetings, and it is well known that he was always present in good time; in fact, punctuality was a habit of his life. At church, prayer meeting, Sabbath school, Foundry Boys' meeting, social gathering, he was always in good time. When going from home he never was in that unfortunate position of seeing a steamboat just leaving the pier, or a train leaving the platform, and himself left behind.

At the colporteurs' prayer meeting he was usually asked to say a word; and the general testimony is that on these occasions he had always something

good and fresh to tell. Many a young colporteur received a healthful stimulus to work from the incidents gathered out of his wide experience, and the encouraging words he spoke. He was beloved by all his brethren, as is evidenced by the notice of his death recorded in their minute-book, and their attendance in such numbers at his funeral.

In every department of Christian work he felt that it was "not by might nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord," that any real or permanent good could be accomplished; "that the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing is of the Lord." And many a time, when deploring unfruitfulness in himself and in others, would he agonise in strong crying with tears, calling upon the Lord to arise and plead His own cause.

He knew that it was his to go forward in the name and strength of the Lord our Righteousness; to walk by faith, and not by sight; that "he who goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him;" and that bread cast upon the waters will be found after many days.

The following loving tribute of personal reminiscences from Councillor J. R. Miller, of whom it may be said, "in labours abundant," will be read with considerable interest. Mr Miller writes:—

"I wish I could respond more fully to your request for some reminiscences of your father. When one's acquaintanceship extends over a long term of years, traits of character that strike one forcibly at the outset become familiar, and so, to some extent, less noticeable. I now find it difficult, for instance, to recal many of the quaint, pithy sayings which so often fell from his lips in conversation, combining, as they did, great shrewdness and insight into character, with the simple guilelessness of a child. And yet, on the other hand, familiarity with his character and habits of thought, all the more impressed one with the sterling qualities of his mind and heart.

"I have known but one John Blackie. Though he and I happened to move in somewhat different circles, socially, from the very beginning of our acquaintanceship, I felt I had in him a friend to whom I could, at all times, open my heart. His counsel was always sound and helpful, and there was an innate dignity in his perfect simplicity and naturalness, that insensibly attracted and inspired both esteem and affection. It was remarkable how, in his case, the inward 'beauty of holiness' shone through, and, in a manner, 'transfigured' a somewhat plain exterior.

"Mr Blackie seemed intuitively to know when the Holy Spirit was at work in a soul, and he was always ready to sympathise and help. I greatly profited by his friendship at a time when the things of God first began to take hold of my conscience and heart. That was soon after the opening of the first 'Free Anderston Church,' in Cadogan Street. I had taken a sitting there, and Mr Blackie soon found me out, and many a talk we had together. I remember once telling him about thoughts and feelings in my heart which seemed to me utterly incompatible with my being a child of God, and I think I yet hear his

emphatic comment, 'Oh man, whiles a' I can say aboot my "hert" is, that it's a cage o' every unclean an' "hatefu" bird.' This humbling view of self continued with him to the last, combined with a firm faith in the Lord Iesus as his 'Iehovah Tsidkenu.'

"Our acquaintance was interrupted in consequence of my ceasing, for a time, to reside in Glasgow, but it was renewed, and became much more close and constant during, and subsequent to, my residence in the north-eastern district of the city. At that time I was elected a member of the Glasgow Committee of the Religious Tract and Book Society of Scotland, and soon after John Blackie was taken on its staff, as colporteur for Bridgeton. He used to come at least once a month to my office, to report about his work in the district, oftener if he had occasion, and many a call was to tell me of some one or other of the Lord's poor and hidden ones in sore need, to whom one always felt it a privilege to be permitted to minister through his instrumentality. I am certain he will be sorely missed at the bedside of the sick and suffering, for he had a singular aptitude for dealing with them kindly and faithfully.

"I was very much interested in one of these cases, which, perhaps, I may be allowed to recall. A young woman, whose father and mother were both dead, supported herself as a millworker, and taught in the Sabbath school of which John Blackie was the superintendent. She fell into bad health, and after a time it was found necessary to send her to the Infirmary. While there John visited her regularly, keeping her supplied with whatever delicacies she could be in-

duced to partake of, and which the kindness of friends enabled him to provide. The young woman however died. John could not bear the idea of her having a pauper's grave; so he set himself to collect as much as enabled him to provide becoming sepulture. The resident physician seemed surprised at his taking so much trouble with regard to one who was no relation and had no claim whatever upon him, and on expressing this to him, his reply was, 'Sir, so-and-so (I cannot remember her name) was a dear sister in the Lord, and I consider it a privilege to be permitted to pay the last respects to one who is a member of the body of Christ,' for He says, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' He said this, knowing that the physician to whom he spoke was an utterly careless man, and his words evidently produced a marked impression.

"For my own part I shall ever miss the refreshing his periodical visits brought to my spirit. However busy I might be when he called, I always found that twenty minutes talk with John Blackie was anything but lost time. It was unmistakeable what lay nearest his heart, for his whole face lightened up and shone as we spoke of the things 'concerning the King.' I always felt cheered and helped by his visits. He had, in a rare degree, that 'godliness with contentment which is great gain;' and it seemed as if one's own soul imbibed something of the same restful spirit by being brought into contact with his. I don't remember of ever having heard him express a single desire for anything of a temporal kind. It was evident that he

had graduated in the same school as the great apostle of the Gentiles, and had attained to the same 'degree,' thus designated, 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.'

"He has left a legacy to his family more precious, more enduring, than silver or gold—and not to them only but to all who knew him—a life and conversation stamping him as one of whom these words can safely be said, 'Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.'"

CHAPTER VI.

WITH THE SICK AND THE DYING.

In the visitation of the sick and the dying Mr Blackie's experience was large, alike as to the number and variety of the cases that came under his notice. While faithful in the discharge of all his engagements, this kind of work claimed and received his first attention. For the long period of forty years he was ever at the call of suffering, and no one during all that time, even till the last day he was seen on the streets of Bridgeton, could charge him with neglect of duty in this respect; on the contrary, his loving and kindly attention at the sick-bed has obtained for him an enduring place in the affections of the inhabitants of the district. Many with tears in their eyes have said, since his departure, "Well do I remember dear old

Mr Blackie; he attended my father on his death-bed;" or, "He read and prayed with my mother in her last illness, or my sick son, daughter, husband, or wife."

It was no uncommon thing for him, on coming home weary with the labours of the day, to find a message waiting for him to go and see some one who had been taken ill, or who was at the point of death; and not unfrequently did he even leave his bed to go and administer a consoling word to some soul ere it bade farewell to weeping friends and entered the dark river which divides us from the eternity beyond. Seldom a week passed without his having a call to make on some sick person, and after he became the Bridgeton colporteur such calls became very frequent. He saw persons in all kinds of circumstances and conditions of life, and earnestly did he pray that he might receive from the Lord some suitable word that would meet every particular case. He gave what he had received in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his visits often proved "like good news from a far country," which are as "cold waters to a thirsty soul." Entering the sick chamber with almost noiseless step, his countenance lit up with a happy smile, he would sit down by the bedside, and, after making kindly enquiries regarding the bodily health, draw from his pocket a well marked copy of the holy Scriptures. Then selecting some suitable portion, he would read and explain a few verses, as the patient's strength would permit, or circumstances suggest. means he would enter into close conversation, and endeavour to find out the true state of the soul, his aim being not to heal the hurt of the daughter of Zion, slightly saying, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace," but to direct the sufferer to the "balm that is in Gilead and the physician that is there." As the servant of the Lord Jesus he was gentle unto all men, yet his gentleness in no way deterred him from speaking the *truth* in love, or faithfully dealing with the souls of men regarding sin and the wrath to come.

His presence at the sick-bedside had, indeed, a certain charm for many, and weary ones have been known earnestly to long for his returning visit, and become so impatient that friends had to be despatched, no matter at what hour of the night or morning, to ask the colporteur to come and read, pray, or speak some assuring word. The outcome of these visits cannot, of course, be measured or told, but the influence exerted in connection with them was felt in ever widening circles; for not only did the sick one often receive the blessing of the Lord, but those also who waited upon the sick-other members of the family, friends from a distance, neighbours-all were spoken to about their personal interest in Christ Jesus; and no opportunity was lost of making known the love of God, the preciousness of Christ, the work of the Holy Ghost, or the greatness of the salvation offered so fully and freely in the Word of life.

The writer remembers on one occasion that about two o'clock in the morning the whole household were awakened out of sleep by a loud knocking at the door. It was the policeman of the beat. He wanted the colporteur to come and see a woman who was in great distress both of body and soul. He went at once, and on the way entered into conversation with the policeman. After sympathising with him in regard to his somewhat solitary yet responsible duties, he asks him, in his own quaint way, if he ever had read the lines in God's Word that referred to policemen—Psalm cxxvii. I. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain." This led to further conversation on spiritual matters, which ultimately resulted in the conversion of the policeman, who is now a watchman on Zion's Hill; and to the enquiry: "Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?" gives back the answer in no uncertain tones: "The morning cometh, and also the night."

On another occasion the family worship was just over, when A. H., an intelligent-looking man called, requesting that he would come and see his dving The poor man betrayed signs of deep emotion, which affected all present. He had been in a good position in life at one time, but unsteady habits had reduced his circumstances considerably. colporteur went with him to see his little daughter at the point of death. That same night the child died. The visitor endeavoured to make use of the occasion. and spoke to the father about the great need of a personal interest in the blood of Christ. The Lord was graciously pleased to give His blessing, and A. H. became a new man in Christ Jesus, and very soon a warm-hearted, humble and devoted servant of the Lord. Often did we admire his strength of purpose in saving "No," in regard to former habits and associations, the earnestness with which he drank in the Word of Life, his heartiness in singing God's praises, and the love he showed to all God's people. Having

caught a severe cold, resulting in a short illness, during which he gave every evidence of unwavering faith in Christ—he died full of hope. It is somewhat interesting to relate that during A. H.'s illness a Roman Catholic woman, the mother of a large family, who lived in the same tenement, requested that she might be sent for whenever Mr Blackie called to see him, in order that she might hear the Word of God read, listen to his conversation, and the prayers he offered up. It is unnecessary to say that this request was readily complied with.

It often happened that he had two or three sick and dying persons on his list at the same time, whose cases presented some points of similarity, but many points of difference: and it was interesting to observe. in these circumstances, the feeling of sympathy that not unfrequently passed from one sick chamber to Sometimes a word spoken by one sick person, carried to the bed of another, has been known to ease a burden or bring comfort to a darkened soul. although the parties had never spoken, face to face. or even heard of one another before. A striking illustration of these remarks may be found in the following cases:—Robert D—— and Robert S— were two young men, both dying of consumption. The one was in comfortable circumstances, the other very poor; both were about the same age, and deeply concerned about the state of their souls. D--- had been well brought up, and bore a high moral character, had been pushing and diligent in business, and had acquired some means, but had lived in the form of godliness while lacking its power.

Robert S—— had had a bad example set before him, both father and mother having been given to intemperate habits, and when he grew up he followed in their ways. He was naturally very clever and intelligent, and was termed by his companions "a jolly fellow."

Dear relatives soothed the pillow of the one—philanthropic strangers that of the other. Mr Blackie visited both regularly, reading the Word, conversing and praying with them, and watching eagerly the influence of the truth upon their souls. Many questions were asked by each, and doubts, fears, and difficulties stated. every case an appeal was made to the Word of Life, and nothing was accepted without a "Thus saith the Lord." Going from bed to bed, the visitor would relate to one some of the conversation he had had with the other. Gradually they became interested in each other, and often during their illness did Robert D-, by the kind ministrations which his means enabled him to render, help to sweeten the outward condition of his unseen friend Robert S----. It was upon the soul of the latter that the light first began to dawn; almost a week after Robert D- was also rejoicing in that light. Both had days of great happiness and sweet communion with the Lord Jesus through the Word and Spirit. In both cases the disease was making slow but steady progress, but as each became weaker and weaker, his attachment to the other became stronger and stronger. with increasing love to the Lord Jesus Christ, who had redeemed them both by His precious blood. As the end drew near, Robert D- sent his last message through their mutual friend and benefactor. "Tell R. S. that, although I never spoke with him face to face on earth, we will meet in heaven as brothers in Christ Jesus." Next day he died in the faith of the gospel of Christ, and a week after R. S. also fell asleep in Jesus, a wonderful trophy of the sovereign grace of God.

Many who had derived spiritual benefit from Mr Blackie's addresses, while in good health, were most anxious to have him attending them during a time of sickness, or on their death-beds. This was quite a common thing both with young and old, as the following cases will show:—The worthy superintendent of the Fairbairn Free Church Sabbath School writes:—"Lately I was visiting the father and mother of a little boy named Tommy W——, who was confined to bed for years, and upon whom Mr Blackie called as often as he could, and with whom he always prayed. So fond was the little sufferer of these spiritual services, that he often said to his mother, 'Why is old Mr Blackie so long in coming? Oh, I would like, mother, if he would come to-day."

Little Tommy died shortly before his aged friend. We trust he has gone to the happy land, whither his friend has followed, to experience, we doubt not, happy meetings with many little ones whom, under God, he helped to get there. Now, he no longer needs to give out the following lines:—

"Will any of those at the beautiful gate Be watching and waiting for me?"

The following from his own pen appears in the published report of the Glasgow Committee for Col-

portage, in connection with the Religious Tract and Book Society of Scotland, for the year 1877:—

"A message was left at my house one night. It contained a request that I would go and see a young man who was very anxious to speak with me. When I called, I found he was in a very happy state of mind. He said that he was anxious to see me before he died, just to tell me that I had been the means of his conversion unto God. One night he was present at a prayer meeting. I was giving an address from Jeremiah ii. and 13, and while speaking of the 'broken cisterns,' which never could satisfy the soul, the Holy Spirit awakened him to see his lost and ruined state, in which condition he was led to drink of the water of life that is without money and without price.

"I visited him regularly till he died, and truly it was pleasant to see how grace was magnified in him, bringing forth 'the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' Towards his end he suffered much pain; and one night, during a time of great agony, he exclaimed that he would not change his bed of suffering, and be without Christ, for all the comforts of a palace. Very soon after this, death put an end to all his sufferings, and he expired in the faith and hope of the gospel of Christ."

Another interesting case was that of a young woman, M. B——, about thirty years of age, who died after a lingering illness. He had many opportunities of visiting this young woman. He had known her all her days, and had often commended the Lord Jesus Christ to her. Often was she deeply affected, and sometime before this had professed faith in Christ. At the be-

ginning of her illness, her mind seemed much darkened by reason of doubts and fears. She gave herself to the reading of the Word with great earnestness, and anxiously did she question her visitor about peace with God, and assurance of eternal salvation. She had lost both these, and vainly was she seeking for them within. Her visitor apprehended her case at once, and sought gently to lead her from her own state and thoughts about the matter, and point her to Jesus only, showing her that it was neither peace nor assurance of pardon that she so much needed, as a true apprehension of the Lord Iesus Christ—a looking unto Jesus, a personal coming to Him, a believing and resting upon Him alone for salvation. The Holy Spirit cleared away the darkness, giving her such a sight of Christ that she could do nothing but weep for joy. And, with her eye fixed upon the "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world," a voice whispered in her ear, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven." Then her peace began to flow like a river. Then could she say, "My beloved is mine, and I am His." M. B--- rapidly grew in grace, and increased in the knowledge of divine things, and in Christian experience. were the happy visits that he paid her during her long illness. Early on that morning on which she died, she took an intense longing to see him. Her friends managed to persuade her to wait for an hour or so. At five o'clock, however, they had to send for him. As he entered the room where she was lying, she cried out, "Oh, I am sure you are not angry at me for sending for you at this time in the morning. I just wanted to say good-bye before I die." And holding out her hand, she continued, "Farewell; I will be the first to welcome you when you come into the kingdom, if such a thing is possible." She was very weak. He prayed shortly with her, after which he added some comforting words, leaving her with one or two texts, in the hope of seeing her early in the forenoon. He never saw her again in life, as she died only two hours after he left.

The following is a case of a somewhat different kind, exhibiting some of the sadder and darker phases of life in connection with the fearful evil of intemperance, and furnishing an illustration of a class of persons not unfrequently met with by the missionary in his labours among the lapsed and fallen:—One dark. wintry night a poor, ill-clad woman entered the meeting held in Hozier Street school-room. wrapt up in an old thread-bare shawl, which was drawn closely about her face. She sat down on a seat at the back of the hall, near the door. The speaker gave out as the subject of his address John vi. 37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." He went on to show the matchless love and grace of the Lord Jesus in coming to seek as well as save sinners, urging upon his hearers a personal application at mercy's door, a real coming to Christ, proving the words of the text. During the delivery of the address she was observed to weep much. At the close of the meeting she was spoken with, and her address obtained. She was affectionately asked back again. She came back, and became regular in her attendance

for about eighteen months, during which time her outward appearance brightened up a good deal, although she remained reticent about her spiritual state. But if she was spoken to personally, or when in the addresses much was said about Jesus and His love, the tears would flow fast over a countenance of sweet expression. When she became ill, she was taken to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. Here one or two visits were paid her, but after some time she was discharged as incurable, the result of a complication of diseases. It was during her lingering illness that the subject of this sketch got to know her history, and it was a sad She was the wife of a drunkard, whose cruel treatment was the cause of her poor state of health and miserable home. For years she had tried to brave it. Her husband, when he did work, made good wages, but he drank her out of house and home. and went from bad to worse, until (happily for her) he left her to the tender mercies of a cold world. It was in this homeless and hopeless state that she entered the meeting as above narrated, and heard the wondrous words of the Lord of glory, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." As she thought how she had despised His loving call, and of His long-sparing mercy, she began to lose all thought of her outward estate, and to be taken up with how she might find her way to the door of mercy. On leaving the place of meeting she thought, amid the gloom and darkness of her outward and inward condition, that she heard a voice coming through the darkness, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." It was the same voice that had before said, "I will in no wise cast out." About

two years after that memorable night she died happy in Jesus. Sometimes when in great pain she would say, "O how glad I am that I have not to go seeking Jesus for the first time; am I not a 'brand plucked from the burning?' Is he not able to save to the uttermost? O yes, O yes, it is true, it is true; 'I will in no wise cast out.'" Holding fast by this gracious promise she fell asleep, looking forward to a glorious resurrection.

We cannot, however, close this chapter without referring to cases that might have been given of a very different character,—cases of persons who seemed to die as they lived, in easy indifference about the great realities of sin, salvation, and the judgment to come; persons whose only desire was to live here, who could talk of their good heart, of their never having done any one an injury, of doing their best and leaving God to do the rest; and who, when an attempt was made to press God's truth upon their hearts and consciences, would feel ill at ease; to whom spiritual conversation was disagreeable, having no desire that the word of God should be read to them or prayer offered up on their behalf,—cases even where such exercises would be altogether forbidden.

One such case may be mentioned. Mr Blackie was earnestly asked by the friends of a young man who was dying, and who had been somewhat careless during his life, to go and speak to him. He did so, but the young man remained indifferent to what was said. The visitor asked if he would pray with him, but, much to his surprise and regret, he would not allow him, and he turned at the same time his back towards him.

But as his friends were interested in his condition, he engaged in prayer for him in an adjoining room.

Reference might also be made to persons who, during a time of sickness, listened to the word of life, and even seemed in a hopeful condition, resolving, apparently, should the Lord spare them, to live only for Him and His glory, but who, on getting well, soon gave evidence that their goodness was like "the morning cloud and the early dew." Earnestly did Mr Blackie press upon his hearers, when addressing religious meetings, the great necessity of deciding at once for Christ, of coming early to him "while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when they shall say. I have no pleasure in them." His long experience taught him that the sick-bed had enough to do with itself, and also the great difficulty of getting persons to listen to the exhortations of the Scriptures when the body is racked with pain. At the same time he learned to adore the divine sovereignty of God, and to rest in the assurance that Jehovah was still "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth."

CHAPTER VII.

AMONG THE CHILDREN.

IT seems almost superfluous to say that a man must have a special gift in order to be a successful instructor of youth, and those who have had any experience in this work know that even to be moderately useful no little tact is necessary. Children at any time are somewhat difficult to manage; how much more when they are grouped together in a class-room or large building. It is a great mistake to imagine that everybody and anybody can be a Sabbath School teacher. Mr Spurgeon, at a Sabbath School breakfast in Edinburgh, said that in going through some of the streets he observed a little board on some of the sunk flats, which read, "Mangling done here." "Such," he continued, "reminds me of some Sabbath Schools." It was the great man's opinion that there was a good deal of mangling done in them.

Shortly after coming to Bridgeton Mr Blackie began to interest himself in the moral and spiritual welfare of the young. He commenced his efforts in this direction by opening a Ragged Sabbath School, the first of the kind in Bridgeton, or, in the phraseology of the present day, a Sabbath School for the children of nonchurch-going parents. Along with a few earnest and devoted teachers, he entered upon the work with great heartiness and determination. A night in the week was set apart for visiting the most destitute parts in the district, and many poor children were induced to attend the school on the Sabbath evenings. Thus for a number of years did he labour with great spirit amidst difficulties, trials, and numerous changes, calculated to discourage him in his work. When blossom and fruit were hidden from the view, he was often stimulated by such portions of the Word as, "Brethren, be not weary in well doing, for in due

season ye shall reap if ye faint not." The Sabbath School was held in one of the halls belonging to the Bridgeton Association for Religious and Intellectual Improvement. Main Street. In connection with this institution, besides the day schools, there were evening classes, known as the Charity School, where the elements of a good English education could be obtained for those children who could not pay for day instruction, or young people who were obliged to work during the day, alas! often at too early an age. Many who occupy good positions in society at the present time were taught their first lesson either in the Ragged Sabbath School, or at the Charity class. and look back on the one or the other, and in not a few cases on both, with fond remembrance. There were other two Sabbath Schools in connection with the association,-No. I, superintended by the late Messrs Alexander and Pollock, and No. 2, conducted for many years by the late Mr Thomas Hart. When Mr Hart resigned on account of failing health, the Ragged School united with No. 2, Mr Blackie remaining superintendent till the year 1863. The union gave a healthful stimulus both to teachers and scholars. Cords were lengthened and stakes strengthened until this became one of the most flourishing Sabbath schools in the east end of the city.

In 1863, when Mr Blackie became missionary at Rutherglen, he found a worthy successor in the person of Mr Peter Gardiner, one of his old scholars; and under his fostering care the school continued increasing, until it was found necessary to transfer a portion of it to another hall. Having thus become two bands.

Mr Gardiner remained superintendent of that portion which was left, Mr George Alexander taking charge of the part that removed to Murdoch's Hall. Thus in reality there were two Sabbath schools, but in name and organisation one, until 1875, when Mr Gardiner, with teachers and scholars, left the hall of the public school and formed the Fairbairn Free Church Sabbath School.

When Mr Blackie became the Bridgeton colporteur, he continued interesting himself in Sabbath School work by visiting and otherwise promoting the advancement of the schools in the district, and on the death of the late Mr Robert Barclay he undertook the charge of the Dale Street Sabbath School, better known as Miss Litster's (both honoured names in connection with Sabbath School work in Bridgeton.) Dale Street becoming too small, he removed to the hall in the public school—the scene of his former labours. Here he remained superintendent until the Sabbath before his death.

In connection with Sabbath School work it was always his endeavour to bring teacher and scholar as often together as possible, and for this purpose he urged the duty of regular visitation, and favoured occasional social gatherings. By these means a good effect was produced, not only on teacher and scholar, but also on the parents of the children. He was the first to introduce in the district what is now known in almost every school as the New Year's-day treat. Many a happy New Year's morning was spent in the Bridgeton No. 2 Sabbath School, as hundreds can well remember who are now no longer children. It

74 John Blackie, the Bridgeton Colporteur.

was a day long looked forward to by the bairns. Children, teachers, and friends met in the school-room at 8 a.m., psalms and hymns appropriate to the occasion were sung, short, stirring addresses were delivered, and each received a New Year's address and a New Year's hymn, printed for the occasion, and every boy and girl an orange on retiring.

These happy gatherings were always brought to a close by singing the superintendent's favourite hymn:—

"Childhood's years are passing o'er us, Youthful days will soon be done, Cares and sorrows lie before us, Hidden dangers, snares unknown.

Oh may He, who meek and lowly Trod Himself this vale of woe, Make us His, and make us holy, Guard and guide us here below.

Soon we part, it may be never, Never here to meet again; Oh, to meet in heaven for ever, Oh, the crown of life to gain."

Next in order came the Annual Soiree, which took place in the month of February, and was the grand gala-night of the year. Another red-letter day was the Annual Trip into the country, which generally took place on a Saturday afternoon, and which is now a standing institution in connection with all Sabbath-schools. A meeting, worthy of being mentioned, was the teachers' preparatory meeting, held on the Thursday nights, at eight o'clock. At this meeting it was expected that each male teacher in turn should take up the lesson for the following Sabbath evening;

giving the others the benefit of his own private study upon the subject, at the close of which he would call for voluntary remarks from those present. Many interesting evenings were thus spent over the study of the holy Scriptures. But in addition to this an important end was served by this meeting, in affording an opportunity for cultivating a readiness of speech, which has been very useful to some who now occupy important spheres in life. It also banded the teachers more together, and was highly beneficial to the children—the Sabbath lesson being better understood and more heartily entered upon than it otherwise would have been.

He also took considerable interest in the various Sabbath forenoon meetings in the East End, in connection with the Foundry Boys Religious Society. From his intense love for the regular ordinances of God's house, he could have wished that the hour for the children's services had been so arranged that they would not interfere with the ordinary diets of worship. It was also his opinion that each meeting should be wrought in connection with individual churches, and form a part of congregational work. He felt that some of the monitors would have been better employed in hearing the forenoon lecture at church, and that arrangements might be made not to require the same monitor's services every Sabbath. If each congregation, he thought, had its own staff of monitors, these could give their services in rotation to the children's church, and thus they would not be deprived altogether of what has proved to be of great service to many earnest workers, viz.,—the minister's forenoon lecture

or sermon. Then he deemed it important that these services should be connected with our congregations, in order that the young people might be drafted into the However, though desiring what he thought amendments, he still believed that these children's services were a means to a great end, and therefore gavethem his hearty support; for he rejoiced at what the society had accomplished, and was sorry that many good men stood aloof because of what seemed to them its defects. "As the twig is bent, so the tree inclines." It was a matter of concern to him that the bend be in the right direction—that the training of the child should be in the "way he should go"—brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Whatever organisation had this end in view received his warm. support. From many a dark court or winding stair, and even from the home of the drunkard, has he heard the lines of a well-known psalm or hymn sung by some poor child who, but for these meetings, would never have heard the name of Jesus spoken of, but in blasphemy.

"Who can tell," he used to say, "what great good the learning and repeating of the text has accomplished, or may accomplish?" More than once has the poor drunkard, on the Sabbath afternoon, been startled by his little girl or boy repeating the text said at that morning's Foundry Boys Meeting—startled out of a state of stolid indifference to utter the words: "I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father I have sinned;" whom, today, the Father rejoices over, saying, "My Son was dead, but is alive again, was lost and is found." The

Bridgeton colporteur's method and manner were peculiarly his own. His style, somewhat quaint, was graphic and warm, which, combined with his easy command of the broad Scotch, had the power of arresting and sustaining the attention of the children. He had a fondness for narrative and illustration. The scenes, stories, and doctrines of the bible were retold with a vigour, freshness, and earnestness that appealed to the heart and conscience, and were so fixed in the memory as not soon to be forgotten. scholars, now heads of families, can well remember his manner of relating the story of Joseph and his brethren; of Moses in the ark of bulrushes; of Samuel and old Eli; of Jonathan and David; of David and Goliath; of Elijah and the chariot of fire; of Elisha and the forty-two children that were destroyed by the two she-bears; of Naaman and the little maid; of the three Hebrew children and the fiery furnace: of Daniel and the lions' den: of Iesus and the woman at the well of Sychar; of Jesus and the little children; and, not to speak of many other incidents in the life of our Lord and the lives of His apostles, the sum of the wholethe "old, old story of Jesus and His love." His ready and retentive memory did him good service in his addresses: for he had quite a storehouse of anecdotes. He was fond of reading accounts of missionary labours at home or in foreign lands, and from such records of God's work throughout the world he gathered information which he made good use of in the sabbath school. After the teachers had gone over the lessons in the various classes, his concluding remarks were often very happy. His thorough knowledge of the

scriptures enabled him, with great readiness, to bring forward parallel passages which gave greater clearness and point to the truth or doctrine taught. When to this is added his love to the Saviour, and his earnest and sincere regard for the souls of the young, his diligence in the use of means—"in the morning sowing the seed, and in the evening withholding not his hand," and ever praying for the divine blessing on his efforts—it was to be expected that, in many instances, his subbath school instruction would be followed by saving results; and such was the case. It would be a very difficult task indeed, to give anything like an adequate idea of the many ways in which the Lord used His humble servant as a means of blessing. His greatest concern was lovingly to make known, in his own sphere, to young and old, the "so great salvation." He knew that the Holy Spirit was in the world, and operating through the word; that when in faith the good seed is sown in the heart, it is the Spirit that quickeneth by His divine power; and that in such cases it brings forth fruit, in some thirty, in some sixty. and in some an hundredfold.

It may be interesting to give here, in the language of an old scholar (now an earnest and devoted worker among children), his impression of his old superintendent.

"The work among the young to which Mr Blackie devoted a great part of his time and attention, was that of the sabbath school. His fatherly spirit found it a pleasing field of labour, in which he never seemed to weary, but ever to have a growing delight. I have no doubt that hundreds of little ones will bless God,

throughout eternity, that they made the acquaintance of old Mr Blackie in time. I believe that his holy and earnest life has been the means, under God, of sending forth a wave of spiritual blessing amongst teachers and scholars of the sabbath schools in the east of Glasgow, which, by God's guidance, will roll on with greater blessing till the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven. Many who were little boys and girls in his sabbath school are now teachers and superintendents, and some even ministers of the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ. And of this I am convinced, that his abundant sowing of the good seed of God's word, harrowed in by much prayer, will bring forth fruit in due season. Mr Blackie acted among the children as a messenger from the King of kings. His stories were God's stories; and, in the holy enthusiasm of his kindly soul, he spoke from the heart to the heart, and thus gained not only the eyes and the ears, but often also the hearts of his young hearers. He bestowed on the children labours of self-denying kindness, so that all the young with whom he came in contact knew that they had in him a real friend. This was especially the case in his warm-hearted dealing with hundreds of children whom he met as he went along the streets of Bridgeton; for he not only spoke kind words, but also gave them little gospel leaflets, which were the means not only of endearing him to the boys and girls themselves, but also to their fathers and mothers. When visiting from house to house, and finding any of the little ones lying on a bed of sickness, many parents speak in glowing terms of his cheery manner, and of the Christian interest

which he showed during a time of suffering. His work in this department was by no means small, as the day of the Lord will alone declare."

Another, long engaged in Christian work in this district, now doing good work in Ireland, on hearing of his death, wrote to a friend as follows:--" And who will fill Mr Blackie's place? The godly old man has many a monument erected to his memory in the hearts of the people. We can cherish kindly thoughts of him, and bright images of his enterprise in the Saviour's service. We don't think of him as an intellectual or physical warrior, though in clearness and in intrepidity he was both, but we think fondly of him as a veteran soldier of the Cross, whose humble unassuming spirit kept him always in the rank-and-file; a saint whose prayers have moved the hearts of stubborn men with a thrill of nobleness, whose persuasiveness has added many to the roll of the redeemed, whose earnestness and unflinching loyalty has added vigour to the failing energies of his brethren. There is a perpetuity in deeds as truly as there is immortality of soul. Now that our old friend John is gone, you and I have good cause to thank God for such privileged friendship and to take courage. We are not likely to make many more such acquaintances until we meet in the 'sweet by-and-bye.'"

His old scholars are to be met with in many parts of the world—in India, Africa, China; in Canada, in the United States of America, and in Australasia. And often did the kindly enquiry reach friends at home: "Is the old man yet alive?" Well does the writer remember a big stirring boy, who was the terror of

the whole school: he gave his teacher not a little trouble to keep him in order. Mr Blackie had a remarkable power over him. Many a time would he out his hand upon his head and speak to him about the Lord Jesus. On these occasions, or when he was telling some affecting story, the tear would start to big Bob's eve: but whenever the school was closed he was as wild as ever. One night Bob's place was empty. On enquiry being made, it turned out that he had gone to sea. Years rolled on and nothing was heard of him, until one night at the prayer meeting a stalwart young man with a weather-beaten and bronzed appearance was observed in the company. close of the meeting he came forward, and taking his old teacher warmly by the hand, asked if he remembered him. Bob had returned; and, with tears in his eyes he recounted some of the Lord's gracious dealings He told how that, when far from home and kindred, and amid the raging storm, he looked back on his Sabbath-school days; how he seemed to feel that hand on his head, and to hear the voice which in former days had told him of Jesus walking on the sea and stilling the storm; how he seemed to see once more the four words he used to see hung up in the school—"Thou God seest me," and so he tried to pray some of the short prayers he had been taught there. He told how God, in great mercy, delivered him in many perils of the deep, preserved his life amidst famine and pestilence, and gave him to know the "blessedness of that man whose iniquity is pardoned and whose sin is covered."

A little orphan girl sits before him on one of the

She wears a bright intelligent expreslower forms. sion of countenance. One night the teacher tells the story of the godly Macphail, who, on his way to the General Assembly, taught a little ignorant girl, whom he met at a country inn, to pray: "O Lord, show me myself," and on his return, to pray: "O Lord, show me Thyself." Maggie goes home filled with the story. and that night, before she lays her head down to sleep, she adds to her usual prayer, "O Lord, show me myself; O Lord, show me Thyself." God heard these prayers, and opened her heart, like Lydia's of old, to receive the word. And weeks, months, and years roll on, until to-day, with a true and devoted love to Christ, she is a medical missionary, devoting her best energies to Zenana work on "India's coral strand;" one whose aim and object may be found in the following words of a co-worker:-

"Zealous for the Master's glory,
Earnest in believing prayer,
Night and day the old, old story,
Always loving to declare:
Never weary in well-doing—
Apt to teach—in patience kind."

One night, after an earnest and stirring address, urging his hearers to come to Jesus three lads were impressed by the warm appeal; they quietly leave the school, and repair to a solitary spot on the banks of the Clyde; and there, where no eye is on them but the eye of Jehovah, they pour out, in turn, a prayer for God to have mercy on them. Two of them, by and bye, become cold and indifferent, but not so the third. He often frequents that solitary spot on the river's

bank. God hears his earnest cry, and he is enabled by faith to receive Christ "as He is freely offered in the gospel," and to-day it is his meat and drink to do the will of his Father in heaven. Actively engaged in Christian work in this district, he looks with a longing eye to "China's millions" that are strangers to "grace and to God;" and so he is preparing himself to be ready to say,—if the Lord should call,—"Here am I. send me."

Mr Blackie continued patiently, perseveringly, and prayerfully, working among the children until the very last. His last text, on the second sabbath before he died, was, "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you," and for two or three sabbaths previously he always closed the school with the following hymn:—

"There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar,
For the Father waits over the way,
To prepare us a dwelling place there.
In the sweet by and bye,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.

"We shall sing on that beautiful shore
The melodious songs of the blest,
And our spirits shall sorrow no more—
Not a sigh for the blessing of rest.

"To our bountiful Father above,
We will offer the tribute of praise,
For the glorious gift of His love,
And the blessings that hallow our days."

No longer is the land seen by faith, for the beautiful shore has been reached, where neither sorrow nor crying can enter, "for God has wiped away all tears from the eyes."

CHAPTER VIII.

SUDDEN ILLNESS AND LAST HOURS— TRIBUTES TO HIS MEMORY, ETC.

"WE all do fade as a leaf." "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down, he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not." This bible truth is also a fact of universal experience. A Persian king, after reviewing his noble army, wept as he thought that in a hundred years every man would be mouldering in his grave. Horace, the Latin poet, writing to a friend, reminds him that his season of pleasure may be soon cut short, "for pale death knocks at the cottage of the poor and the palace of the king with impartial step." Death puts an end to all earthly projects, strips us of all our possessions, and levels all ranks and classes of men. In the cold grave to which we are all fast hastening, "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." The river of death is not always uniform in its flow—now calm and noiseless, as when death has been long looked for, at another time, dark and rapid as when death has come suddenly or unexpectedly. Then sometimes it is the overflowing flood, sweeping all before it; as when by the terrible shipwreck, the alarming railway catastrophe, the appalling explosion, the ravages of famine, the epidemic scourge, or the horrors of war, masses of our fellow creatures are launched into eternity. Thus the unknown millions of the human race that have peopled this earth, with only two exceptions, have all glided along, or are being swept hurriedly into the insatiable gulf that still cries, "give, give."

Mr Blackie had entered upon the last year of the "three score years and ten," and although it was known that, in the ordinary course of nature, he could not be with us for many years, it did not occur to us that he was to be so suddenly taken away. Ah, how prone we are to keep the evil day far away, notwithstanding all the intimations that we are constantly receiving, in Providence, that the "night cometh." Death never seems to come in the way we could wish: it seems rather the truth to say that he discards our fondest desires; but, we forget: Is he not the ambassador of the King of kings who will not be bribed, nor turn aside from his errand? A messenger of divine, infinite, and unerring wisdom, an executor of the sovereign will of Jehovah of hosts, a servant, but only a servant, of Him who said: "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, having the keys of hell, and of death."

Mr Blackie continued working to the very last, attending, during the winter of 1879-80, perhaps more meetings than he had done in any one year since he became colporteur. Many, since his departure, recall his happy and loving addresses, and remember the confidence with which he spoke of his soon going home to be with the Lord Jesus for ever and ever. This was especially the case at two or three children's soirees. The superintendent of Fairbairn Free Church sabbath school writes as follows in con-

86

nection with an address he delivered at their soirce on 20th February 1880:—"Many of us will never forget his great tenderness when he spoke of the old associations in connection with sabbath school work in the district, and how, with tears of joy in his eyes, he urged the boys and girls, for the last time, to give their whole hearts to Jesus."

At the colporteurs' annual soiree, held at the close of the year, he also made some stirring remarks, urging on the younger colporteurs, thorough devotedness to the work, and giving them illustrations, how they might be exceedingly useful in carrying the message of eternal life from door to door. We remember all these things after he is gone, but at the time they did not affect us as foreshadowing the coming sorrowful event; for he always spoke and lived as one prepared for the heavenly summons and whom death would in no way surprise. Like the ship's compass, he always pointed in the one direction, in the calm or storm, in the noon-day sunshine or amid the darkness of the night. See him at duty or at leisure. his eve was fixed on Bethlehem's Star. He ever exemplified the words of the apostle. "To me to live is Christ and to die is gain." He died in harness. His last sabbath on earth, save one, was spent as usual in his sabbath school; and, at the close of the lesson, he earnestly addressed the children on the "new heart." He said that it was a long time since Christ had changed his heart, and he had felt very happy ever since; that he now had entered his threescore and tenth year, and that it could not be long now till he was at home with the Lord Iesus for evermore.

He closed that address with the hymn:—"In the sweet by and bye."

On the Wednesday after the following sabbath he had crossed the flood, and had gained the other side. It was on Thursday, the 1st of April, that he complained of being very unwell. For three weeks previously we had almost, without interruption, a cold withering east wind blowing. During that time he often spoke of the piercing wind on coming in after the labours of the day. But, save a slight irritating cough, he appeared just as usual. On the above Thursday he came in a little earlier than was his wont, and said to his wife that he felt very unwell, and that if he had his tea he thought he would go to bed; which he did. That night he did not sleep very well, and, on getting up next morning, felt little better. He was advised to keep his bed for the day, which he did, and took some aperient medicine. Next day the doctor was called in, and, on examination, found that he was suffering from an attack of inflammation of the lungs: but he thought there was no immediate danger, only that it would keep him in the house for a few days: and he prescribed accordingly. Next day was sabbath; the doctor calling in the morning found him much better. At the worship in the morning and evening, he sang the psalms very heartily, as well as at a short religious service we had during the day with him. He spoke little, and seemed in a somewhat drowsv state. On Monday the doctor thought him still improving. On Tuesday he was not so well again. However he talked a good deal more on that day: he also asked to see the evening newspaper, as

the country was in the heat of the parliamentary election. He had also a short conversation with A. R., long a faithful standard bearer of his, and who now succeeds him in the superintendence of his sabbath school. He also joined us at family worship in the evening, and sang with some spirit the first four verses of the one hundred and third psalm, following closely the reading of the chapter, and uttering his "Amen" at the prayer. His sleep was somewhat broken during the night, and early in the morning a change set in for the worse. The doctor did not think there was much cause for alarm, and still hoped that he would pull through. We had no idea that death was so near. Addressing his wife he said: "This is a sore turn I have taken. Jeanie, but we are in the Lord's hands." He continued in the same sort of drowsy state during the forenoon, and at intervals seemed half-unconscious. The writer during his own illness had been his constant care, his first question every morning being as to how he felt. That day for the first time during the three years that illness had lasted we missed his loving enquiry. From one o'clock he seemed much engaged in religious exercise: he praved for all the work he had been engaged in. that God would pour out His Holy Spirit on the rising generation: then he seemed as if he were at family worship, and he said to his wife that he could not read any more. His daughter came in about two o'clock, and on observing the change, she went to his bed-side and said, "Father, I'm sorry to see you so ill." She could not refrain from weeping, on seeing which he turned his head

round and said that she must not be vexed, he was in the Lord's hands. Then he began to pray as before for a blessing on the Lord's work, and seemed as if he was engaged in addressing a meeting. He spoke of the righteousness of Christ,—a righteousness wrought out on Calvary, and with eye fixed upon the ceiling he said, "O Lord, cover them with that righteousness, for Jesus' sake. Amen." He was silent for a moment, the writer whispered in his ear, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever," and asked if he would like him to pray: he said, yes. On concluding, as if unconscious of all around, but as if addressing a religious meeting, he again broke out on the union that subsists between Christ and His people, saving that this union was not like the unions of earth, that were constantly being broken up; it was an everlasting union. Being asked what he thought of the Lord Jesus now; he answered: "Jesus has been long dear to me, and He is none the less now." Again he was as if engaged in prayer, praying very much as before that we might all be covered with the righteousness of Christ. Then he began to speak again of the union that subsists between Christ and His people, and as if addressing his wife he said, "Jeanie, you'll take that sermon to poor Katie, she is very anxious about her soul,—that sermon, you know. that I was speaking to you about." This referred to a young woman whom he had seen a week or two before, and who died, giving evidence of a change of heart. His voice began to get weaker, but it was never so sweet. His eye seemed as if it had caught a glimpse of something beyond. He said, "Christ's

Kingdom has many nobles; Abraham is there; Moses, Joshua, Samuel and David are all there; all the holy prophets and martyrs are there: Dr Chalmers and M'Chevne are there: then he named a number of ministers whom he was familiar with as preachers of righteousness that were all there, including Arnot, Gibson. Fairbairn and Brownlow North: then he prayed for a blessing on the Psalm that was sung and the chapter that had been read. His daughter had to go out for a little, and, taking his hand, she said, "Father, I'll need to go away for a little." To this he answered, "Yes, Janet, but Jesus, will go with thee." Still in the semi-unconscious state, he would repeat over and over what has been here related, his last themes being those that he loved to discourse upon when in health,—union to Christ, the need of the righteousness of Christ as a covering for guilty man, the Kingdom of the Lord Iesus, begun on earth. complete in heaven. These he continued to talk about till a few moments before his end. Gradually the voice grew fainter, and apparently without a struggle, save the twitching of his shoulders, he bade farewell to the tenement of clay. It was a little before we could realise our loss. We were dumb, we opened not our mouth; it was the Lord that had done it: but when it was made too plain that he was gone to join the general assembly and church of the first-born, all that we could say was, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." He was gone. He had fought a good fight, he had finished his course, he had kept the faith, henceforth there was laid up for him a crown of righteousnesswhich the Lord, the righteous judge will give to him in "that day," and which He will give also to all them that love His appearing.

The sad news soon ran throughout the district that old John Blackie was dead. Many were struck with awe, for a week had not yet passed since he was seen on the streets, walking to and fro in prosecution of his calling. "Dead!" "are you sure it is old John and not his son?" Many such like enquiries were made that evening: and before the darkness of night had fairly settled down on Bridgeton, many a sigh was heard, many a lip quivered, and many a tear was shed, by old and young, because their dear old friend had passed away. One little girl on being told by her mother, who was one of his subscribers for a magazine, burst into tears, crying; "Oh mother, mother, am I never to see old Mr Blackie again?" A poor imbecile lad, when it was made known to him that Mr Blackie was dead, gave a peculiar cry followed by a heavy sob, and wept aloud, as he took in the sad news that his kind old friend would visit him no more; and getting hold of the last two tracts which he had received from him, made it plain to his mother that he wished them put up at the foot of his bed to remind him of Mr Blackie's visits.

The following tributes will shew how much the deceased was held in esteem by friends and brethren of this neighbourhood. The venerable James Munro, now of Edinburgh, but for well nigh fifty years, the eloquent, faithful, and loving minister of the Free Church at Rutherglen, writes as follows:—

"Mr Blackie was a model colporteur: What would

be the value to these kindred isles if there were 'five hundred as good as he?'

"And Bridgeton, of Glasgow city, was precisely the sphere in which he was fitted to be at once most acceptable and most useful. Few men were better known throughout that wide and teeming district. None were more cordially held in reputation—a sincere and consistent follower of the perfect exemplar. He was open, frank, manly, natural; so that his inherent worth was universally recognised: he resembled a sterling book with an elegant binding, or a smiling frontispiece. He had always at hand a pertinent word for every comer: for the old folks and for the bairns, the grave and the gay-for those who bade him God-speed in his arduous, toilsome work-or those, alas! no inconsiderable number, who either scoffingly or in sullen silence inquire. 'What have I to do with God, or He with me?"

"A very Barnabas—son of consolation—a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost,—a good soldier of Christ in full panoply of the spirit arrayed, he had need to be who aspires to adequately supply the place which is left wide by dear, gentle, loving Mr Blackie's translation to heaven."

The next is from the venerated Dr Edwards, whose jubilee was celebrated during the present year, the much esteemed minister of Greenhead U. P. Church.

"Mr Blackie—lately deceased—was known to me many years as a colporteur and Christian worker in the eastern district of Glasgow.

"I formed a very favourable opinion of his special qualifications for the service in which he was employed.

and of the zeal and earnestness of purpose with which he pursued his unobtrusive but useful, labours among the working-classes, whom he sought to benefit by his visits from house to house.

"In the course of my pastoral visits, I often came across proofs that his endeavours to do good were valued in the district, and were not without some good fruit. He has now gone to his reward, as a faithful and warm-hearted servant of the Master he loved; and, I believe, has left a worthy example for others, however humble their sphere, to follow, in seeking to do something that may live after them, and help to promote the moral and spiritual improvement of their fellow-men."

The following is from Mr James Miller, of Dalmarnock, for many years an intimate friend, and who is well known in Bridgeton for his untiring zeal in the social, moral, and religious improvement of the people.

"My recollections of the deceased Mr Blackie are very precious, and could be lengthened out in narrative form; but, as brevity is desirable, I will only give a few leading thoughts about him as they may occur while I write.

"I became acquainted with Mr Blackie nearly twenty years ago. We were both directors of the 'Bridgeton Association for Religious and Intellectual Improvement,' long before the 'Education Act' came into operation. Ever since I knew him he impressed me by his great simplicity of character.

"I think all his Christian friends, as well as the men of the world, must have been impressed by his marked truthfulness and suavity of manner. "I have had opportunities of hearing the opinions of many women in Bridgeton, and have been struck with the uniform expression of great respect they had for Mr Blackie.

"He was a 'living epistle of Christ, known and read' as such by the general population. Since Mr Blackie became a colporteur he had special opportunities of mingling with the people, and coming into direct personal contact with them.

"His 'sweet and tender sympathy'—the product of a sanctified knowledge of the Word of God—made him welcome in the homes of the poor; and the good seed he was so diligent in sowing will yet bear fruit.

"I have often spoken to Mr Blackie about the trial of his faith and patience, in his son being laid aside from ill-health, after his long preparation for the work of the ministry. His meek submission to the will of God was quietly and humbly expressed.

"I was often on the same platform with Mr Blackie at Sabbath-school soirees. He was always set down as one of the speakers, and his addresses indicated his own special characteristics. They were simple, scriptural, and comprehensible by the children. He made no pretension to the culture got at school or college, but in his own homely Doric he expounded the lessons he had evidently prepared for the youngsters; and, true as the needle to the pole, whatever was the subject of his address, his mind veered round to Christ and His salvation, and in winning and ardent language he commended Jesus and His love to his young friends.

"I am not sure how long Mr Blackie served his

divine Master in the Sabbath-school cause, but I am sure it may be said of his first scholars, 'The child is father to the man.'

"I was lately sitting beside a young woman on her death-bed, and it was gratifying to hear her feeble voice speaking in glowing terms of Mr Blackie as her Sabbath-school teacher.

"He 'rests from his labours, and his works follow him.'"

Then follow four loving tributes from the following ministers—Rev. John Edgar, Rev. William Hutchison, Rev. Gilbert Lawrie, Rev. Hugh Mackintosh—all well known east end ministers, who had many opportunities both of meeting the worker and observing the fruits of his labours in this populous district, and who had a warm place in his affections as ministers of Christ; and last, though not the least, is the extract minute of the Glasgow colporteurs, made at their first meeting after the death of their fellow-labourer:—

From the REV. JOHN EDGAR, M.A., Barrowfield Free Church.

"The feelings awakened by the news of the death of Mr John Blackie were akin to those of the traveller who, as he pursues his lonely way on a dark night, suddenly finds himself, by the extinction of the friendly light from a distant dwelling, cast into gloom. He was a 'burning and a shining light.' During eighteen years I enjoyed his friendship, the benefit of his bright example, and the stimulus of his warm Christian life. Among the first who assisted me in

evangelistic meetings. I have ever since had a deep sense of his worth. He was a Barnabas and a Nathanael in one, a son of consolation, a man without guile. His life-work, his meat and his drink, was the salvation of souls: in season and out of season he was at it. Besides his own regular meetings, unselfish and ungrudging, he spared not himself to assist others. Christ crucified was his constant theme, the love of Christ his constraining motive. His was not so much the gleaming lightning and the rolling thunder as the tender rain and the gentle dew. Not by the word of command did he drive men into the refuge, but by the voice of persuasion and earnest pleading did he draw them to Jesus. Many must have responded. A single bean planted produced, it is said, in one year one thousand five hundred and seventy-five new beans; how many souls have received life through his instrumentality is known only above. He sowed bountifully, and doubtless reaped also bountifully. We shall miss him going his rounds as colporteur. with his tracts and news about the last book he had read, and the last anxious soul that had emerged into Many households will miss him, where his presence reminds us of Mrs Hemans' lines on Spring:

> "Ye may trace my steps o'er the wakening earth, By the winds which tell of the violet's birth. By the primrose stars in the shadowy grass. By the green leaves opening as I pass."

"His was a noble, a heroic life, a striking illustration of what a man of God, by faith and prayer, can accomplish. With such agents, the work of colportage in Scotland must effect unspeakable good."

· From the Rev. WILLIAM HUTCHISON, Newhall Parish Church.

"I have known the late Mr John Blackie, colporteur, for upwards of eight years, and, during that period, have been forced to respect him very highly for his simple, earnest spirit, and his devotion to the cause of Christ. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying, that his worth cannot be measured by any man, and his power for doing good the great day only will declare.

"His influence was felt wherever God in His providence placed him; and that influence is living to-day, and exercising more power upon the minds and hearts of some men, than it did when he was by our side. His was that quiet, unostentatious Christianity, which forced itself upon his fellow-men in a wonderful way, and compelled them to listen to him whether they would or not. Hundreds have been blessed through him spiritually, and some are left behind to bear witness to the good they thus received.

"His earnest advice to troubled souls was as balm to them, and his encouraging words lifted many a load from weary hearts.

"He availed himself of every opportunity to visit the sick and dying, and whenever he was sent for on such occasions, he was ready to go, and administer the blessed consolations of the gospel, and ask, in humble prayer, God's best gifts at such a time.

"Many will miss him, young as well as old; but none so keenly as his own family, with whom we sympathise very affectionately. I feel too that I

will miss him, for not a few families in my own congregation have been greatly blessed through him, and my own soul, on more occasions than one.

"He has gone to his rest, and has got his reward, and his works are following him. May God grant that we may follow in his footsteps."

From the Rev. GILBERT LAWRIE, M.A., Fairbairn Free Church.

"Many in Bridgeton were sad when told that Mr John Blackie was dead. They felt as if they had lost a friend—one whom they loved, and one whom they would like to meet again.

"No one was better known by the inhabitants of this district of our city. For many years he had laboured. among them as an agent of the Colporteur Society. He was personally known to old and young, and had been a regular visitor in their homes. He was highly respected for his Christian character, and much loved by all.

"You could not be long in his company without being impressed with the simple and clear hold that he had got of the truth as it is in Iesus. He was literally one who rejoiced in the Lord Jesus Christ. This gave a brightness, simplicity, and hopefulness to his character that is not often met with even in Christian men.

"He was often found visiting the sick and dying, and his visits were greatly prized by them and, I have no doubt, much blessed.

"During all his life he took a deep interest in

children, and was a great favourite with them. He was so warm-hearted, cheerful, and earnest. He continued till his death to conduct a sabbath school in that district. Much good has been done by him in this department of Christian work, and many will rise up and call him blessed. It was very interesting to hear him, in his own quaint way, address a gathering of young people. At most of the social gatherings of the young in that district he was present, and it was very striking to see how the old man secured the attention of the little ones, as he earnestly pled with them to give their hearts to Jesus. He will be much missed in Bridgeton, and most of all by the young."

From the Rev. Hugh M'Intosh, M.A., London Road Free Church.

"Having had the privilege of becoming acquainted with Mr John Blackie soon after I came to Glasgow, and having had the opportunity of knowing the respect in which he was held, and the salutary influence he wielded in a large part of the city, specially the east end, it gives me the sincerest pleasure to express my sense of his high Christian character and extensive usefulness.

"I never met him without being impressed with the quiet depth, genuineness, and scriptural richness of his whole character and life. In him there was combined, in a very remarkable manner, the evangelical fervour of our most earnest modern evangelism, along with much of the thoroughness, stability, and spiritual unction of puritanism. His Christian expe-

rience was evidently of the deep, thorough, searching character of the olden time, but with also not a little of the freshness, light, and joy of our best modern ex-By his uniform consistency and great insight of character, he exerted such an influence for good as has seldom been exceeded by any one in his position, and his name was a tower of strength to the cause of Christ in the neighbourhood in which he lived. In his work as colporteur, he not only did his own proper duty, but carried the fragrance of Christ with him wherever he went, and led many non-church goers to attend the house of God. But it was by his interest in children, and his great services in sabbath schools that he won his brightest laurels; for by these he not only endeared himself to many of the young. but led them in the way of life, and sowed the seed that will bring forth precious fruit in generations yet unborn. Altogether we will not soon see his like again.

"'Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail, from among the children of men."

Extract Minute of Meeting of Colporteurs' Association, held at 43 Holmhead Street, Glasgow, on Thursday, 15th April 1880.

At this their first meeting since the death of their dear friend and fellow-labourer in the vineyard of the Lord, Mr John Blackie, who departed this life on the 7th instant—

The colporteurs cannot proceed to any other business without first putting on record their sense of the

great loss they have sustained by his removal from amongst them. His Christian intelligence, his unfeigned piety, his devotedness to his duties as a colporteur, his affectionate fraternal spirit, and his kindly wisdom, commended him to the warm esteem and love of all his fellow-labourers. They devoutly thank God for the grace given to him, and will ever cherish his memory as that of one of the most godly of the followers of Christ within the range of their acquaint-They cannot mourn as those who have no hope, for they cannot think of their departed friend otherwise than as sleeping in Jesus, and awaiting a glorious resurrection, while his works do follow His example will long speak to them as that of one whose life was hid with Christ in God. They will lay to heart the dispensation which is mixed with so much mercy, and pray that they all with faith and patience may follow him in so far as he followed Christ, until they resume their fellowship with him in a better and brighter world.

WILLIAM GILLIES, President.

JOHN BIGGAR, Vice-President.

ROBERT S. M'CULLOCH, Secretary.

Extract from the Glasgow Newspapers of Monday 12th April 1880.

FUNERAL OF MR JOHN BLACKIE, "THE BRIDGETON COLPORTEUR."

The remains of Mr John Blackie were interred on Saturday afternoon in the Southern Necropolis. From

the general respect in which the deceased was held in the district, a desire was expressed that the funeral should be a public one. Services were conducted both in the Newhall Street Mission Church and at the house of the deceased, 249 Main Street, by the Revs. Alex. Wilson, G. Lawrie, Hugh M'Intosh, and John Edgar. The company was a very large one, including relatives, ministers, brother colporteurs, and friends of all denominations. Mr Blackie was engaged in Sabbath-school and missionary work during fifty years, and for the last fifteen years has been the active and earnest agent of the Religious Tract and Book Society of Scotland, the directors of which society set a high value upon his services. He had a warm, kindly, and winsome manner, was beloved by the ministers and people of all denominations; also by the children, who would often be seen on the streets in groups around him asking for tracts or little He had a kindly word for all; many a sick and dying bed he visited. Of him, in truth, has it been said, "that he was a son of consolation, a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." Mr Blackie leaves a widow, two sons, and a daughter to mourn his loss.

Dear Reader, perhaps you too have lost a beloved father or mother, an affectionate brother or sister, a loving husband or wife, some dutiful son or amiable daughter. You never will forget those dying moments when the last chilly wave swept for ever from your sight your priceless treasure. It was in order to fill up this void which death is ever making among the

company of believers on earth, that John, the beloved apostle, was summoned to write, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord:" so that those who are left behind to mourn their loss should not sorrow as those who have no hope. "I heard a voice from heaven," said John. This is the authority for a statement so full of comfort and consolation to all who have friends "asleep in Jesus." "A voice from heaven," not a voice from earth—a voice coming with the authority of heaven. And so John was commanded to put it upon record, to inscribe it with a pen, in order that it might go down to the latest ages of the church's history, to strengthen the faith and cheer the heart of all who love the Lord Iesus Christ in sincerity and in truth. This then is the true saint's epitaph, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." He is blessed, because being vitally united to Christ, death has no power over him. His life is hid with Christ in God. "All things are yours," said the apostle, "for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Safe in Christ, as Noah was in the ark. In Christ the city of refuge, as the man-slayer was safe from the avenger of blood. In Christ who said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me. though he were dead, yet shall he live." It was this union to Christ that led the holy apostle to utter that other comforting statement of God's word, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." The "blessed dead," while they lived on earth, were enabled. through sovereign grace, to receive Christ, not only for time but also for eternity; and thus dying in the faith

of the gospel of Christ, they are pronounced blessed from henceforth. The body is blessed, for it is asleep in Iesus, and although it must return to its constituent elements, nevertheless it will be raised "a glorious body," like the body of Christ; "for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Iesus Christ." But not only is the dust of Christ's people dear in His sight, but at death "the souls of believers do immediately pass into glory," and so are for ever with the Lord. "For if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" so that "absent from the body we are present with the Lord."

Thus they are blessed from henceforth. For who will tell us of that unspeakable joy that shall thrill their souls on the morning of the resurrection when the last trump shall sound, and the dead, small and great, shall come forth to meet Prince Immanuel—that morning when every eye shall see Him, and those that pierced Him shall wail because of Him. Blessed from henceforth! Ah, the cycles of eternity will alone reveal what is bound up in this unfathomable expression. Thus the voice that came from heaven saying unto John, write, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," is confirmed by the

testimony of the spirit; "Yea," saith the spirit, "that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

They rest from their labours. Their toiling days are over now-their works of faith, and labours of love are at an end. The training of the young, the circulating of the Scriptures, the evangelisation of the masses, the clothing of and caring for the poor and the needy, and the sending of the gospel to all ends of the earth, which were the causes of great anxiety, care, watchfulness, and prayer to the devoted Christian, whom these pages are designed to commemorate, are over now, for he rests from his Death has silenced the familiar voice. No longer is it heard beseeching men to turn unto God. The strife and the conflict over, the victory is now No more fightings without or within. devil, the world, and the flesh," that used to wage war against the kingdom of God within the soul no more struggle for the victory, no longer wound severely; for now the eternal God is the saint's refuge; He is the shield of His help and the sword of his excellency, and all His enemies are found liars unto him, for He rests from His labours. The body has fallen asleep in sweet repose, and the soul has passed into that rest which is the holy and never-ending recreation of the spirits of just men made perfect; "yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them."

"Their works do follow them." This is the place that the Bible assigns to good works. The works of

a good man-a converted man-a holv man-do follow him. The Church of Rome would reverse this order, and make good works go before them; but the Spirit saith that their works do follow them: do not even go alongside of them, but follow them! follow them whither? Follow them beyond the cold dark river of death-follow them through the gates of the golden city, onward to a glorious eternity of inconceivable blessedness. Let this word, then. cheer the Christian parent, the devoted Sabbathschool teacher, and all faithful labourers in the Lord's vineyard. Plough in hope, sow in hope; and when you are resting from your labours, those works of faith and labours of love will follow, and the seed sown will spring up and bear fruit—some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundredfold. In a closing sentence, if the works of the godly follow them to the judgment seat, and throughout all eternity, so will the works of the wicked. Lost opportunities, the remembrance of broken Sabbaths, and deeds of darkness, will haunt the soul in the place of woe; for is it not written. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap?"

There was a day when John Blackie realised himself to be a poor guilty creature—a miserable sinner; that was the day of his awakening,—a day of power. Have you felt your sin and misery? There was a day when John Blackie was one of the happiest men on God's earth; that was the day when he saw the Lord Jesus bearing away his sin on Calvary's Cross—when he felt that he could do nothing but say out of a full heart, "He loved me and gave Himself

for me." Have you ever experienced a day like that? If not, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, be entreated to come unto Him, for He has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Ah, remember the day of grace will soon be over, the door of mercy will soon be shut; remember that the dead only are blessed who die in the Lord.

Other Works Illustrative of Christian Colportage.

UNCLE JOHN VASSAR;

Or, The Fight of Faith.

By his Nephew, Rev. T. E. VASSAR. With Introduction by Rev. A. J. GORDON, D.D.

Price 1s. 6d.

THE SAME WORK UNDER THE FOLLOWING TITLE—

PREVAILING PRAYER;

Or, Triumphant Faith, as seen in the Life of John E. Vassar.

Illustrated.

With Introduction by Rev. A. A. Bonar, D.D.,

Price 2s. 6d.

JOHN PEARCE, THE COLPORTEUR; Or, What shall we Read?

By the Author of "Miss Grey's Text," &c.

Price 2s. 6d.

EDENSIDE;

Or, the Lights and Shadows of our Village.

By Mrs George Cupples.

Price 25.

ż

۲,

